

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

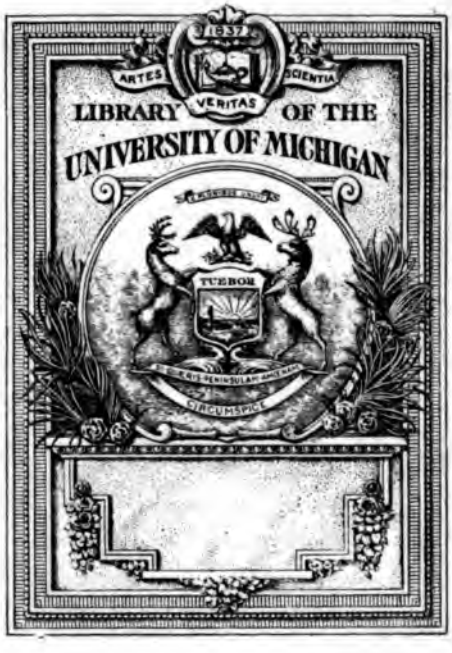
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`


1837
ARTES
SCIENTIA
VERITAS
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
TUEBOR
CIRCUMSPICE




1837
ARTES
VERITAS
SCIENTIA
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
TUEBOR



A RUSSIAN COMEDY OF ERRORS





A RUSSIAN COMEDY OF ERRORS



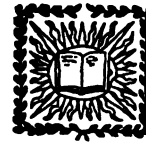
A RUSSIAN COMEDY OF ERRORS

WITH OTHER STORIES AND SKETCHES OF RUSSIAN LIFE

BY

GEORGE KENNAN

Author of "Siberia and the Exile System," etc.



NEW YORK

THE CENTURY CO.

1915



Copyright, 1912, 1915, by
THE CENTURY CO.

Copyright, 1897, by
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY

Copyright, 1902, 1912, 1913, 1914, by
THE OUTLOOK COMPANY

Published, February, 1915

To

MY WIFE

Comrade in Russia and "General Encourager"
in all Ventures and Adventures

305044





CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	A RUSSIAN COMEDY OF ERRORS	3
II	A SINGING BIRD OF PREY	31
III	RUSSIAN "MOUSE TRAPS"	55
IV	A BODY, A SOUL, AND A PASSPORT	85
V	THE ESCAPE OF PRINCE KRAPOTKIN	111
VI	"A HEART FOR EVERY FATE"	139
VII	"THE WORLD OF A SINGLE CELL"	179
	I THE CHECKERBOARD SQUARE	185
	II THE GIRL IN NO. 59	206
VIII	A SACRILEGIOUS FOX HUNT	237
IX	NAPOLEONDER	261
X	THE ZHELTUGA REPUBLIC	289

For permission to reprint the stories and sketches included in this volume I am indebted to the courtesy of *The Outlook*, the *Century Magazine*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, and the Macmillan Company.

G. K.

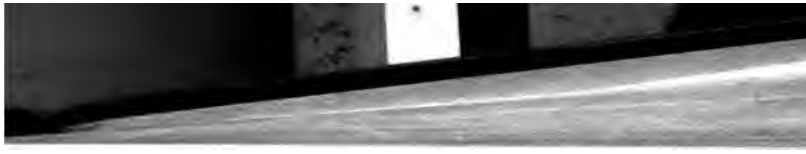
Broadwater,
Baddeck, Nova Scotia,
1915.





A RUSSIAN COMEDY OF ERRORS





A RUSSIAN COMEDY OF ERRORS

I

A RUSSIAN COMEDY OF ERRORS

THE young Russian Jew, Leon Khairanski, was in trouble. When the "underground" office of his revolutionary newspaper, *The Free Word,* was discovered and raided by the St. Petersburg police, in June, 1879, he happened, by a fortunate chance, to be absent, and so escaped arrest; but he was forced to go into hiding, and after living a precarious existence, for two weeks or more, in the houses of his friends, changing his sleeping quarters almost every night, he determined to seek safety abroad. Getting out of Russia, however, is sometimes quite as difficult as getting in. Nobody can leave the Empire without presenting his passport and getting written permission from the authorities, and this Khairanski dared not attempt, for the reason that the passport on which

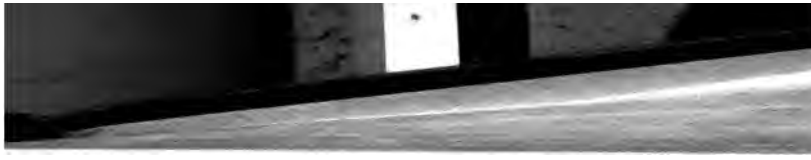
he was living was forged, and he had changed his name to correspond with it. He might as well give himself up to the police at once as go to the Foreign Office with forged documents and ask permission to leave the Empire. In this emergency, he thought of his friend Isaac Gordón—also a Jew—who was a clerk in one of the city banks.[1] Isaac was a man of about his own age, and of the same racial type. He was not connected in any way with the revolutionary movement; had never even been suspected of "political untrustworthiness"; and was, in every sense of the word, a "safe" man.

"If I can only borrow his passport for a few days," thought Khairanski, "I can get out of the Empire on it without the least difficulty. His reputation is good, and he might naturally enough be going to Germany on the business of his bank."

THE LOST PASSPORT

Acting promptly on this happy thought, Khairanski that night made his way to the rooms of

[1] There is a well known Jewish family in Russia which bears the Scotch name of Gordón [accented on the second syllable]. One of the most distinguished members of it was the poet and novelist, Leon Gordón, originally Judah Loeb Ben Asher, who was born in Wilna in 1831, but who removed afterward to St. Petersburg.



Isaac Gordón, who was then living in an apartment house on the Voznesenski Prospekt. He found his friend sitting at an open window, smoking a cigarette and listening to the faint music of an orchestra playing in a popular summer resort on the Fontanka.

"Well! This *is* a surprise!" exclaimed Gordón in a cordial tone, as Khairanski entered the room. "Where have you been for the last month? I 'd about given you up for lost. I saw by the papers that the police had raided your newspaper office, and I did n't know but they 'd put you in a 'stone bag.' [2] Draw up a chair, take a cigarette, and account for yourself."

Khairanski had dreaded to propose the passport scheme, partly because he knew that Gordón did not approve of the revolutionary movement in the extreme form which it was then taking, and partly because the request that he had to make was one which involved the risk of serious consequences. Encouraged, however, by his friend's cordial greeting, he said:

"I 'm not in a 'stone bag' yet, but I 'm likely to be, if somebody does n't come to the rescue. I

[2] A descriptive term invented by the Russian peasants to designate the oubliettes in the castle of Schlusselburg. It was afterward applied to any cell or dungeon in a fortress.

have n't been to see you lately because I 'm *'ne legalni'* [an illegal person], and I did n't want to compromise you by coming to your apartment. You think, perhaps, that you know me, but you don't. Permit me to introduce myself—Ivan Bezpassportni [John Passportless], formerly editor of *The Free Word,* and now a fugitive from justice."

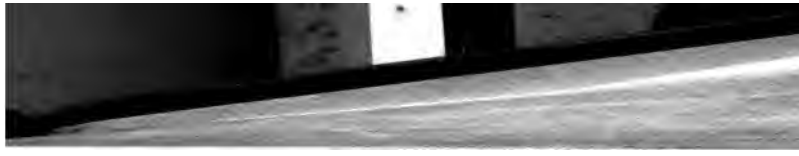
"What 's happened?" asked Gordón seriously.

"Nothing yet," replied Khairanski, "but something 's going to happen as soon as the police find out where I am. I 've been dodging from house to house, at night, for two weeks, sleeping by turns in all the 'conspirative' quarters that I know. I 'm about at the end of my rope, and I 've come to you to ask if you 'll lend me your passport, and let me use your name, until I can escape into Germany."

The expression of gravity in Gordón's face deepened. Laying down his cigarette, he closed the window softly, lowered the transom over the door, and then, returning to his seat, looked searchingly, at his friend and inquired in a low tone:

"Have you become a terrorist?"

"No," replied Khairanski. "Before God I have n't! I 'm not guilty of any crime except



editing a revolutionary newspaper. But that 's serious enough in these days—it means penal servitude if I 'm arrested."

Gordón seemed to reflect.

"What am I to do without a passport, if I lend you mine?" he inquired.

"It will only be for a few days," pleaded Khairanski. "I 'll send it back to you by registered post from Berlin. You 're not under suspicion; your mail will not be opened; and there is n't one chance in a hundred that you 'll need your passport before I return it to you."

Gordón lighted another cigarette and meditated.

"Suppose that you 're recognized by one of the secret detectives at the frontier, and arrested with my passport in your possession? That may mean a term of fortress imprisonment for me."

"It is n't possible!" said Khairanski. "I 'm not known by sight to the police in St. Petersburg, still less to the detectives at the frontier. Your height, features, eyes and complexion correspond in a general way with mine. We don't look alike, but we should be described in about the same words. Your passport will fit me perfectly; but if worst comes to worst, and I am

arrested, I 'll swear that I stole your passport while you were away from your rooms."

Gordón shook his head.

"I 'm afraid that story would n't go," he said. "No man, in these days, leaves his passport around where it can be stolen."

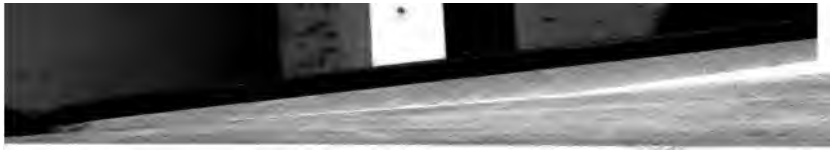
"But no question will ever be raised," said Khairanski eagerly. "The document will be in perfect order. You 'll have permission to leave the Empire and I 'll go in your place; that 's all. There won't be the least excuse for raising the question of personal identity at the frontier. I 'll get out without a single inquiry."

Again there was an interval of silence.

"All right!" said Gordón at last. "It 's a risk, but for old friendship's sake, I 'll take it. But you 'd better stay with me for a day or two, and let the passport go to the authorities from my apartment. You 're fairly safe here, and when the permit comes— 's' Bokhem!' " [Go, with God.]

Three days later, Leon Khairanski, with Isaac Gordón's passport and a permit to go abroad in his pocket, took the night express for Berlin.

After he had gone, Gordón felt increasing anxiety with regard to the possible consequences of the irrevocable step that he had taken. He was



not afraid of being called on to produce his passport while it was out of his possession; but he did fear that Khairanski would be recognized, or suspected, by the frontier police, and that an inquiry would be made by telegraph with regard to the authenticity or ownership of his papers. The revolutionary movement had already taken a terroristic form; the police were following up every clue which could possibly lead to the discovery and identification of conspirators; and mass arrests, on general suspicion, were being made almost every night in the "politically untrustworthy" class. Jews, in particular, were the objects of strict surveillance, because they had taken an active part in the revolutionary movement from the very beginning. On racial grounds alone Khairanski might be suspected and detained at the frontier, because his passport explicitly stated that he was a Jew.

The more Gordón thought of these things, the more apprehensive he became; and in reflecting upon the course that it would be safest to pursue, he finally decided to pretend that he had lost his passport, and that Khairanski, after finding and advertising it, had been overcome by the temptation to use it, as a means of escaping from police pursuit. In order to prearrange evidence which

would support this story, he went to the office of the newspaper *Golos*, on the very night of Khairanski's departure, and left there for publication the following advertisement:

PASSPORT

Found in the street, a lost passport, in the name of Gordón. The owner can obtain it by calling and identifying it at the apartment of Khairanski, Little Garden Street, No. 62.

Unfortunately, Gordón could not remember, with certainty, the number of the house where Khairanski had lived. He thought it was "62" but he was not sure. A mistake, however, could not matter much, because nobody would ever claim the passport, and if there should be occasion to use the advertisement as a proof of the fixed-up story, it would be easy to explain the wrong number as a clerical or typographical error.[3]

Fear, however, is a bad counselor; and when Gordón, through apprehension, advertised as "found" the passport that had never been lost, he committed a serious error. Then, when he lo-

[3] No directories were published at that time in Russian cities. A person's residence could be ascertained only through written application at a municipal address bureau.



cated Khairanski's apartment at Little Garden Street, 62, instead of 26 [the right number], he made a bad matter worse, and prepared the way for extraordinary and surprising consequences.

Under the system of "preventive censorship," which was then in force in Russia, the contents of newspapers were submitted to two different sets of officials. Reading matter of all kinds went to the censor proper, who modified, red-penciled or prohibited such articles as seemed likely to have a "pernicious tendency," or to endanger the safety of the State by "exciting the public mind." Advertisements, on the other hand, were sent to the police, who had full power of supervision and control.

When the proof sheets of the *Golos* reached the central police station, on the night of Khairanski's departure from St. Petersburg, they were distributed among a number of subordinate officials for examination. Advertisements of merchandise were only casually glanced at; but particular attention was given to notices of books and theatrical performances, as well as to "Wants," "Lost," "Found," "Funerals," and announcements of lectures or meetings. When the short-haired, shabbily-uniformed officer to whom

the sheet containing Gordón's advertisement had been given, handed it in at the desk, the chief inquired curtly, "Well, anything in it?"

"Nothing of importance, sir, unless,—there 's an advertisement of a passport found. It may be of no consequence, but it 's a little queer. Passports are not often lost in these days."

The chief took the slip and glanced at Gordón's advertisement.

"They 're both Jewish names," he said. "Better look it up. No Jew ever lost a passport. Send a man to 62 Little Garden Street to inquire. Tell him to examine the passport carefully and get the full name, number, date, and place of issue."

"Slooshioo S' " [I obey], replied the officer.

Half an hour later, the second officer returned and reported, "No such man there, sir. I routed out the dvornik [janitor] and half a dozen of the lodgers. They all say that no Khairanski ever lived there."

The chief reflected a moment and then said, "There 's something about it that is n't clean. Find out where Gordón and Khairanski live and arrest them both at eight o'clock to-morrow morning."

"There 's probably more than one man of each



name," suggested the officer respectfully. "We don't know which of them are implicated."

"Well," said the chief impatiently, "arrest them all. There can't be more than a dozen of them. We ought to get something out of a lot of Sheenies like that. Have them taken, with all persons found in their rooms, to the Litovski Zamok, and lock them up in one of the large kameras; we 'll sift them later."

"Slooshioo S'."

THE FUEL CARTRIDGE

When Alexander Gordon, traveling salesman for The Fuel Cartridge Company of Indianapolis, finished his trip through Iowa and Minnesota, he had every reason to be satisfied with the results of his work. He had been showing and selling a newly invented appliance for the safe and expeditious kindling of fires in kitchen stoves. Accidents, due to the pouring of kerosene from half-empty cans upon slowly burning wood, had suggested to a thoughtful Hoosier the use of an asbestos cylinder, half as big as a rolling-pin, which could be saturated with the petroleum, placed just inside the front damper, and set on fire. Experiment proved that the flame from it would ignite the most incombustible wood, and that the

use of it would reduce the danger of accidental explosion to *nil.*

A company had been formed to manufacture the device, under the name of "fuel cartridge," and salesmen had been sent into the field to introduce it. Gordon had been showing samples and establishing agencies in Minnesota, and had met with gratifying success. When he returned to St. Paul, after a week's campaign in the country, he found awaiting him a telegram from his company, directing him to "report in Indianapolis immediately for foreign service." He took the night express for Chicago, and at three o'clock on the following afternoon presented himself at the home office. The managing director greeted him cordially and said, "We 've sent Atkinson to take your place in the Northwest, and we want you to go to Russia. There ought to be a big field there for the fuel cartridge. The climate is cold, the winters are long, most of the people burn wood, and petroleum from the Baku wells is cheap. A cartridge is needed in practically every house. We want you to go to St. Petersburg and organize the business. How does it strike you?"

"It suits me," said Gordon briefly. "When do you want me to start?"



"The sooner the better," replied the manager. "I 'll have samples, circulars, and a letter of credit here for you to-morrow. Suppose you go to Washington for your passport and sail on Saturday's steamer?"

"All right," said Gordon. "I 'm on."

"You 'll have to be careful and prudent," said the manager. "There 's a good deal of political disturbance in Russia just now, and it 's a despotic government. Don't get mixed up with nihilists, and don't have any dealings with the officials if you can help it. They 're said to be very arbitrary."

"From what I know of Russian officials, said Gordon judicially, "they 're cocky because everybody knuckles down to them. The people have all been serfs, and they 're as meek and submissive as sheep. I saw a lot of them in Minnesota last week—'spirit wrestlers' they called themselves—but they did n't have spirit enough to wrestle with a June bug. You could walk all over them. Anybody could put up a front with such people as that. If the Russian officials heard a little straight American talk occasionally they would n't get so cocky."

"I 've no doubt you could give them the straight talk, all right," said the manager with

an amused smile, "but don't do it; keep away from them; it 'll be safer."

On the following day Gordon started for Washington; obtained there a passport from the State Department; and sailed from New York Saturday morning for Liverpool.

Two weeks later, from the deck of a Wilson Line steamer in the Gulf of Finland, the representative of The Fuel Cartridge Company caught his first glimpse of St. Petersburg—a huge shining dome and a four-hundred-foot lance of gold, rising above the dark green forests at the mouth of the Neva. When the customs officers and gendarmes came on board he had his first experience of Russian methods. His passport was stamped and returned to him without question, and his samples, which he had slipped into the legs of trousers at the bottom of his trunk, were not discovered; but the gendarmes took away from him a dozen or more personal and business letters; three or four English and American magazines; and a single book—Dixon's "Free Russia"—which he had bought in London. The officers explained their seizure of these things by saying that they had no time then to give them careful examination; but they assured the owner politely that he could recover



his property by calling for it in person at the central police office.

If Gordon's correspondence had not been seized, he might not have thought it worth while to reclaim the book and magazines; but among his letters were three from his best girl, which he had carelessly left in his suit-case when he changed his cap and sea-going reefer for "shore clothes." The idea of leaving those letters to be read, reread and commented upon by a lot of Russian police clerks was intolerable. The very thought of it exasperated him, and when, accompanied by a courier interpreter, he left the Hotel d'Angleterre for the police station, he was in a very irritable state of mind. The reception given him when he entered what seemed to be the main room of the station did not tend to restore his equanimity. Nobody, at first, paid any attention to him; but when he approached a large desk, over which hung a colored lithograph, or oil painting, of the Emperor, the uniformed official who was sitting thereat looked him over with a scowl and said sternly, "Take off your overcoat!"

The courier whispered to Gordon in English, "It 's the custom, you know; I forgot to tell you; there 's an icon (a picture of the Virgin and

Child) and a portrait of His Majesty in the room, and it is n't thought respectful to wear overcoats."

Gordon controlled himself with an effort, took off his overcoat, and threw it over one arm.

"Go out in the entry with your overcoat!" said the unappeased official savagely. "This is no place for overcoats."

The courier softened the command in translation and said in a frightened whisper, "I 'll take out the coat"; but Gordon had understood the official's tone, if not his words, and he became forthwith a slumbering volcano of suppressed wrath.

When the courier returned, after depositing the offending garment in the entry, the official inquired, with a slight relaxation of severity, "Shto vam oogodno?" [What is it you wish?]

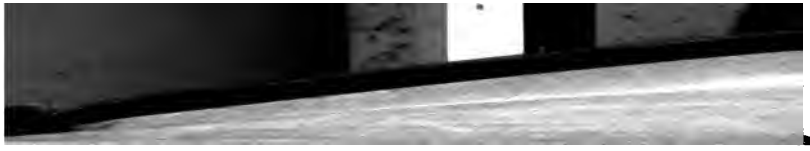
"I want the books and letters that the gendarmes took away from me on the steamer yesterday," replied Gordon, with rising temper.

"What is your name?"

"Alexander Gordon."

The official turned to a clerk and said, "Find his things."

In a moment they were brought. The letters



were intact; but "Free Russia" had apparently been mutilated, and several articles, as well as all the advertising pages, had been torn out of the magazines. When the *disjecta membra* were put into his hands, Gordon looked them over with assumed coolness, and then, feeling an impulse to be as offensive as possible, said to the courier, "Tell him that I presume he has had the front and back pages of the magazines torn out because they contained advertisements of ivory soap. From the observations I 've made since I came into the Empire, and from what I see here I judge that soap is a prohibited article."

The terrified courier did not dare to put these insulting words into Russian, but the English-speaking clerk who had censored the magazines and who had brought them to the desk translated them.

The face of the official darkened with wrath, and turning to the English-speaking clerk he said, "Bring me the man's passport, and the parts that you cut out of the magazines."

When they were brought, he looked them through and then, addressing the American, said, "You bear a Jewish name; are you a Jew?"

"Do I look like a Jew?" replied Gordon hotly.

"Of course I 'm not a Jew! A Jew is just as good, though, as any other man, and I 'd far rather be a Jew than a Russian policeman."

"There are plenty of Jews in your country," said the official, "and if I were sure that you are one, I 'd send you to the frontier with a criminal gang by *etape*. Did you know that one of your magazines contained a poem entitled 'Tyrannicide'?"

"I did n't know it," replied Gordon, "but it 's likely enough. What of it?"

"It 's a direct incitement to Czar-murder, and the possession of such literature in Russia is a penal offense. You 've seen fit to insult one of His Majesty's officers in the performance of his duty, and I 'll show you that you can't do it with impunity. Take him to the lock-up," he ordered, turning to two policemen who were standing near.

Gordon, by this time, was in a towering passion. He felt an almost irresistible impulse to start what an American collegian would call a "rough-house" by assaulting personally the red-faced official who dared to send a free American citizen to the lock-up; but he had not wholly lost his reason, and choking down his wrath, he allowed himself to be escorted by the two officers



to a temporary-detention cell in another part of the building. There he spent the rest of the day and the night.

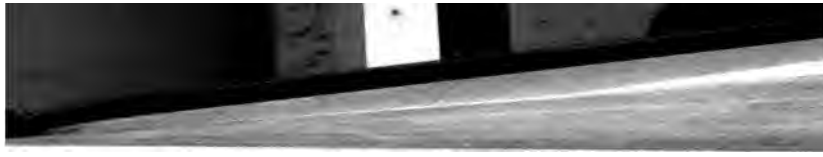
When, on the following morning, he was set at liberty, he returned to the Hotel d'Angleterre; fortified and cheered himself with a good breakfast and a cigar; and then, feeling somewhat encouraged, put a fuel cartridge and two or three descriptive circulars in his pocket, and went to see some Russian hardware dealers whom he hoped to interest in his invention. On his way down the Nevski, he had occasion to use his handkerchief, and in taking it from his pocket, he accidentally pulled out also his business circulars, which dropped unnoticed to the sidewalk. If these circulars had contained only the English descriptive text, they probably would not have attracted attention; but they were embellished, unfortunately, with a picture of the fuel cartridge in operation; and the flames issuing from the cylinder inevitably suggested to any Russian mind, an exploding bomb. Inasmuch as bombs were then becoming the favorite weapons of the nihilists, the peasant who happened to pick up the circulars thought it his duty to hand them to the nearest policeman.

When, a little later, Gordon returned to his

hotel, the proprietor, who was a German, met him at the outer door and said in an excited whisper, "The police are in your room."

He apparently expected his guest to rush for a droshky and make his escape; but Gordon, conscious of innocence, said merely, "The police be d—d!" and walked quietly upstairs to his apartment. But he little expected to see what he did see when he opened his door. There were four police officers in the room, all armed with sabers and revolvers. His trunk had been forced open, and its contents had been taken out and strewn in wild confusion over the floor. The single fuel cartridge that he had left in one of his trouser-legs had been found, and had been prudently placed in a wash-basinful of water. Before he had time to realize what it all meant, two of the officers sprang upon him and seized him by the wrists, while the other two drew their revolvers, as if in expectation of desperate resistance. A rapid search of his person brought to light a second fuel cartridge, which was placed in the basinful of water beside the first.

"You are under arrest," said the officer who seemed to be in command. "You 'll find it safer not to resist."



But Gordon was so dazed that he did not even think of resistance.

"Take him to the Litovski Zamok," said the same officer. "Put him in a solitary-confinement cell and see that he does n't communicate with anybody."

In two or three minutes Gordon found himself in a closed carriage, with a police officer on each side of him, and in less than a quarter of an hour, he was incarcerated in a seven-by-nine cell in the Litovski Zamok, where, after his money, letter of credit, and personal papers had been taken away from him, he was finally left alone. In the three days of solitary confinement that followed, he had ample time to put facts together, draw inferences, and reflect upon the vicissitudes of the fuel cartridge business.

The Russian authorities, meanwhile, investigated the bombs. The pyrotechnic expert to whom they were submitted allowed them to soak forty-eight hours in a pan of water. He then ventured to dissect them, and found, to his surprise, that they contained nothing but asbestos, and that it would have been impossible either to explode them or burn them. The chief of police, in the meantime, had had a translation made of

the descriptive circular, and as soon as he received a report from the expert, stating that the cylinders were, and always had been, harmless, he ordered the prisoner's release.

When Gordon returned to the Hotel d'Angleterre, the proprietor welcomed him with joy. "I knew it would be all right," said the sympathetic German. "The Russian police are stupid. They imagine they see an elephant when it 's only a mouse."

"I 'm no mouse," said Gordon gloomily, "but I think I 've had enough of this country. A man never knows over night what 's going to happen to him. I 'm going back to London to-morrow."

But how can any mortal know what is in the lap of the gods? While the representative of the Fuel Cartridge Company was packing his trunk that evening, a compositor in the office of the *Golos* was setting up the advertisement of the lost passport, and just as Gordon was falling asleep, the chief of police was issuing an order for a round-up of Jews.

Gordon rose late on the following morning and had tea and rolls in his apartment. He then went downstairs, and had just lighted a cigar and taken up a copy of the London *Times* in the reading room, when the proprietor came to him



with a policeman and said, "You 're wanted again."

"What 's the matter now?" demanded the incensed American. "Can't I keep out of jail one whole day?"

"I don't know," replied the landlord. "The officer says you are to go with him. Perhaps they want to ask you something more about the bombs."

"D—n the bombs!" said Gordon fervently. "But I don't wonder the people in this country use them. If I 'm not back before Saturday, send my trunk by the Wilson Line steamer to Brown, Shipley & Co., London, and cable the Fuel Cartridge Company, Indianapolis, U. S. A., that I 'm in jail."

Again the prisoner was taken to the Litovski Zamok. This time, however, he was not shut up in a solitary-confinement cell, but was conducted to a large kamera, twenty or thirty feet square, from which, as he approached it, he could hear a babel of commingled voices. When the door was thrown open, he entered what seemed to be a ward in a lunatic asylum. The kamera was crowded with men—all apparently Jews—who were shouting, gesticulating, protesting, inquiring, and arguing, in a perfect frenzy of excite-

ment. As Gordon did not understand a word of Russian, he found it impossible to get any explanation of this prison mass-meeting of jabbering, gesticulating Jews, or of his own personal relation to it. It seemed to him like a wild Old Testament nightmare. At last he found among the prisoners the treasurer of a Jewish benevolent society, who spoke English. From him he demanded, "What 's the row? Who are all these people?"

"The police have made a raid on the Gordón and Khairanski families," said the young Jew excitedly, "and nobody knows why. There are five Gordóns and six Khairanskis here already."

"Which are you?" inquired Alexander with sympathetic interest.

"I 'm a Gordón," replied the young Jew.

"Then the Lord have mercy on your soul!" said Alexander solemnly. "I 'm a Gordon myself, from America, and I 've been in jail three times this week. What 'll happen to a Russian Gordon is beyond imagination."

In further conversation, Alexander learned that there were present eight or ten Jews of other names, who had happened to be in the Gordón and Khairanski apartments when the arrests



were made. They, too, had been gathered in, and among them were four or five needy students in the university, who had merely called at the treasurer's house to receive the quarterly stipends which were due them from the benevolent society's fund. There the police had happened to find them, and had taken them into custody as "frequenters" and "associates."

In course of time, the excitement quieted down, and early in the afternoon, the chief of police began to separate the sheep from the goats by the process which he called "sifting." One after another, the Jews were interrogated and taken away separately for further examination, and the kamera gradually emptied. When Alexander Gordon's turn came, near the close of the second day, he was taken to the prison office. There he found the English-speaking clerk from the central police station, who said to him, "His Excellency directs me to inform you that your passport and a permit to leave the Empire have been sent to your hotel. He suggests that you make immediate use of them both."

Gordon took the night express for Berlin that evening, and as soon as he reached London, he sent to his employers the following cable:

A RUSSIAN COMEDY OF ERRORS

Fuel Cartridge Co.,
Indianapolis.

They jail a man in Russia if he mentions soap, if he sells fuel cartridges, or if his name is Gordon. Am coming home.

ALEXANDER GORDON.



A SINGING BIRD OF PREY





II

A SINGING BIRD OF PREY [1]

"YOU ask how I happened to go to Siberia to study music," said my Russian friend Hartveld, as we sat smoking in the open-air restaurant of Brunn's Park, Helsingfors. "I might reply by asking you how you happened to go there to study penal servitude. I presume the inducement in both cases was the same. You thought you would find, among the political exiles in Siberia, characters, conditions and stories of personal adventure that would be novel and interesting, and that you could use as literary material.

"I expected to find there, among the common criminals, the runaway convicts, and the 'Ivan Dontremembers' [2] songs and melodies

[1] For the essential facts of this story I am indebted to the Russkoe Bogatstvo, and to the well known collector of Russian folk-songs, V. N. Hartveld, of St. Petersburg.—G. K.

[2] When a hard-labor convict has escaped from prison in one part of Siberia, and has been rearrested in another part, where he is not known, he tries to conceal his identity and

that would be original and striking, and that would be the expression, in musical form, of strong emotion and very unusual experience. The field of folk-music in European Russia had been carefully and thoroughly worked. Large collections of peasant songs had been made, and we knew all the varied forms in which the thoughts and feelings of the common people find musical and poetical expression; but nobody had ever collected the songs of penal servitude. I happened to hear two of them in Moscow, some years ago, and was so strongly impressed by the originality of the melodies to which the words had been set that I conceived the idea of going to Siberia and making a study of convict music—the music of the exile parties, the forwarding prisons, and the mines. I had some reputation in Russia as a collector of folk-songs, and my relations with the higher bureaucratic officials in St. Petersburg happened to be such that my application for permission to visit the prisons and the penal settlements was promptly and courteously granted. Armed with letters from the Prison and Exile Department, I left St. Peters-

prevent an examination of his record by calling himself "Ivan Dontremember." There are dozens of these "Ivans" in every large Siberian prison.—G. K.



burg in June, 1908, and spent the whole summer in Siberia going as far east as the mines of Nerchinsk, on the headwaters of the Amur, and visiting all the more important prisons and penal settlements from the Urals to the Pacific."

"Did you succeed in getting the convicts to sing for you?" I inquired.

"Yes," he replied, "but with great difficulty. Singing in the prisons had always been strictly forbidden; and it was hard to make the convicts believe that a request so extraordinary and unprecedented as a request for songs was not an official trap of some kind that would get them into trouble. When the warden of the prison went with me into one of the kameras[3] and said to the prisoners, 'Well, boys, how about some music for this gentleman? He wants to hear you sing'; there was dead silence. The convicts—most of them burglars, highwaymen, or murderers—stared at me with surprise, curiosity and suspicion, but did not open their mouths. When the warden pressed them for a reply, and assured

[3] A "kamera," in a Russian prison, is a large room in which are confined a dozen or more prisoners. A "cell" is usually a much smaller apartment, intended for a single occupant. A "kartser," or dungeon, is a still smaller punishment-cell, which has no chair, bed, or bedding, and which, as a rule, is perfectly dark.—G. K.

them that I was not an official, but merely a collector of folk-songs, who would not get them into any trouble, one of them, speaking for the others, would say respectfully, 'We don't know any songs, Your High Nobility; music is not one of our sins.' Then I would have to explain who I was and what my objects were, and the warden would have to argue and persuade for half an hour, before the prisoners could be brought to admit that they knew any songs, or had ever sung any. Siberian convicts—naturally enough perhaps—regard with great suspicion official requests and proposals that seem to them extraordinary or inexplicable. Why should they be strictly forbidden to sing for their own amusement, and then suddenly be asked to sing for the satisfaction of a *chinovnik* [official] from St. Petersburg? It might be some new kind of scheme to entrap them into a compromising admission; and the safest thing to do was to disclaim knowledge of music altogether. But they generally yielded at last, when they became convinced that I was really a musician, not a *chinovnik,* and that singing for me would not lead to any unpleasant consequences. And wonderful songs and melodies I got out of some of



them! Did you ever happen to hear, in eastern Siberia, the 'Leg-fetter March'?"

"No," I replied, "I think not. I heard in the trans-Baikal a sort of wailing chant, which the convicts sang as they marched through the peasant villages on their way to the mines; but it had no marked time and was a begging-song, rather than a march."

"That 's not it," said Hartveld. "The 'Leg-fetter March' has no words; it is a melody, not a song. On the road, the convicts hum it, with closed lips, and in the prisons they mark the time with a rhythmical clashing of leg-fetter chains, and add a weird buzzing accompaniment made by blowing on paper-wrapped combs. If you have never heard it, I can't possibly give you an idea of it without instruments and a chorus. You may think from my description, that it is a childish performance, more likely to excite laughter and ridicule than serious emotion; but, in reality, it is an extraordinary and tragic thing, and fairly makes the ants crawl up and down one's back. After my return from Siberia, I got together a chorus and a small orchestra and gave a series of concerts, in which I introduced songs of penal servitude and the 'Leg-fetter March';

but the effect of the march on the audiences was such that the Government finally prohibited it. Thousands of Russian concert-goers now know the air, but to play it on an instrument in public, or even to hum it, is a misdemeanor.

"From a musician's point of view, the melodies of many of the convict songs have great novelty and originality, due in part, perhaps, to the fact that they have been borrowed from, or influenced by, the aboriginal music of the Asiatic natives. Hundreds of convicts make their escape, every year, from the Siberian prisons or mines, and wander, for months, over the tundras, or through the *taigá* [primeval Siberian forests], seeking shelter and food, now and then, in the tents and yourtes of the Samoyedes, the Buriats, or the Yakuts. When they are finally recaptured, they bring back to the prisons, and set to Russian words, the airs that they have learned from the natives with whom they have been living. Melodies that have originated in this way are almost as hard to sing or play as they are to transcribe, on account of their unfamiliar scale-intervals and abrupt changes of mode or key; but the convicts catch them with great quickness of ear, and reproduce them with surprising accuracy and skill. In the Tobolsk prison, for example, they



have a song, consisting of solo and chorus, in which the key—B flat major—is changed to a different one in every phrase; and that's a trick that the most experienced opera singer would have difficulty in performing without the aid of instruments."

"How do they get such skill," I inquired, "if they are not allowed to sing in their kameras and have no practice?"

"Most Russian peasants are born with a musical ear," replied Hartveld, "and they have plenty of practice before they get into prison. Besides that, they do sing more or less, in spite of prohibition. The turnkeys are often fond of music, and they let the prisoners sing, now and then, in a subdued tone, when the higher prison authorities are out of the way. Then, too, the best voices have practice in the choirs of the prison churches. But it is impossible to account for the extraordinary skill that some of them show, not only in vocal music but in instrumental. You probably could n't find a balalaika, a violin, or a stringed instrument of any kind, if you should search the Siberian prisons from Tobolsk to Nerchinsk; and yet, in one of the loneliest ostrogs of the trans-Baikal, I ran across a balalaika-player—a common convict and a wholly un-

educated peasant—whose technique was simply marvelous. Did you happen to visit, in the course of your investigation, the east-Siberian mine of Gorni Zerentui?"

"Yes," I replied, "I spent a day or two there in the winter of 1885–6. It impressed me as the dreariest, most God-forsaken place in all the trans-Baikal. The prison, too, if I remember rightly, was one of the worst that I saw."

"They 've put up a new building since your time," said Hartveld, "and, as Siberian prisons go, it is n't so bad; but the place, as you say, is dreary and lonely. You feel as if you were ten thousand miles away from the world of living men. But it was there that I found my balalaika-player. The warden and I had been through nearly all the rooms in the large building, and had not been able to find a single prisoner who would sing, or who was willing to admit that he ever had sung. Finally, we went to the kamera of the 'bezsrochni'—the life-term convicts—where we found eighteen men, all murderers, and most of them men who had made homicide a profession, or who, at least, had killed more than once. At the stern command of the guard, 'Smeerno! Po mestam!' [Silence! Take your places!] they all sprang to their feet, with a



great clashing of chains; formed a semicircular line in front of the sleeping-platforms; and with hands and arms held rigidly at their sides, stood 'at attention.'

"'How do you do, boys?' said the warden affably.

"'We wish you health, Your High Nobility!' shouted the prisoners hoarsely in unison, using the prescribed form of response to an official greeting.

"'What do you say, boys, to singing a few songs for this gentleman? He has come from St. Petersburg, with the permission of the higher authorities, to study your music; and he will be very much obliged if you 'll sing for him. How about it?'

"Dead silence.

"'Don't be suspicious, boys, just because we ask you to do something that is usually forbidden. It 's all right; nothing will happen to you. This gentleman is not a *chinovnik,* or a *revizor* [investigating officer]; he 's a musician; and he wants to hear your songs, and write the tunes down on paper, so that he can compare them with the songs and tunes of the *prostoi narod* [common people] in Russia. He has already collected hundreds of songs, and he knows that you

have some good ones. Don't be obstinate—sing for him.'

"Dead silence. The prisoners eyed us sullenly and suspiciously from under their brows, but did not open their lips.

" 'Semyonof!' said the warden, addressing one of them directly. 'You must know who the singers are in this kamera—tell us. We are not trying to trap anybody, or get anybody into trouble.'

" 'We are birds of prey, Your High Nobility,' replied Semyonof. 'Even when we are out of the cage we don't sing—we tear meat.'

" 'It 's of no use,' said the warden, turning to me, 'they won't sing—at least until they have talked it over among themselves. We 'll try again later.'

"We were about to leave the kamera when an old convict, with snow-white hair and beard, and the face of a patriarch, halted us by saying, 'There 's Klochkof, Your High Nobility. He was bragging, only a little while ago, that he could sing, and he even used to fool with a balalaika.'

"As we afterward learned, the convict thus pointed out was not a favorite among his com-



rades, and they were quite ready to get him into trouble by betraying him.

"'Good for Klochkof!' cried the warden. 'He 's a better man than any of you. Step out, Klochkof!'

"The convict thus summoned came forward slowly, rolling a little from side to side as he lifted the heavy chains of his leg-fetters. At a distance of six or eight feet, he stopped, raised his eyes from the floor, and looked steadily at the warden, without the least sign of fear or embarrassment. He was still a young man—thirty-five years of age, perhaps—with a compact, athletic figure, a strong but expressionless face, dark, opaque eyes, and chestnut-brown hair, long on one side and cut short on the other from the forehead to the nape of the neck.

"'The boys say you can sing, Klochkof,' said the warden. 'Is that so?'

"'They 're only making game of me, Your High Nobility,' replied the convict. 'Long ago, when I worked in a factory, I used to pay some attention to such things, but now—'

"'Well, don't you do it now?'

"A sudden flash of animation gave unwonted fire to the convict's dull eyes.

"'What 's the use of denying it?' he replied. 'I know a few songs.'

"His comrades exchanged glances significantly, as if to say: 'Now he 's in for it.'

"'When will you sing for me, Klochkof?' I asked.

"'I can't sing without an accompaniment, Your Honor. If I had a balalaika now,—perhaps—'

"'All right! I 'll get a balalaika for you. When will you sing?'

"'Whenever Your Honor pleases.'

"'He can come to the office when we 're ready,' said the warden. 'Let me know when you 've looked up a balalaika, and I 'll send for him again.'

"'Who is this Klochkof?' I asked, after we had left the kamera. 'What 's his history?'

"'The Devil only knows!' said the warden. 'I can tell you more or less about the character of every other man in the prison; but I 've never been able to make this one out. He is a quiet, orderly convict; obeys the rules, and gives us no trouble; but he seldom speaks, even to his fellow prisoners, and when a man is silent all the time it must mean something—it is n't natural. Of course there are many convicts who are not talk-



ative; but Klochkof is a regular champion of silence. So far as speech is concerned he might be a Trappist monk. I don't know what it means, but there 's something mysterious in it.'

" 'How did he become a convict?' I inquired.

" 'That involves another mystery,' replied the warden. 'We know what his crime was, but that 's all we do know. In a peasant village of the province of Yaroslav, he rushed into a church where a wedding was taking place; killed the bridegroom and the bride, with two blows of a short-handled ax; and then quietly gave himself up. He refused to explain his act; attempted no justification of himself when he was tried; and made no plea for mercy when he was sentenced to penal servitude for life. He was silent then, and he has been silent ever since. Take him all in all, he 's a problematic character. I never before heard him say as much as he has said to-day.'

"On the following afternoon, I succeeded in finding an old, much-used balalaika, in the house of a ticket-of-leave convict of the Free Command[4] and the warden sent an armed guard to

[4] Convicts whose behavior in prison has been satisfactory are released on a limited ticket of leave, before the expiration of their penal terms, and are allowed to live in houses of their own, just outside of the prison stockade. They are known as the "Free Command."—G. K.

bring Klochkof to the office. In five minutes he appeared, walking clumsily and awkwardly in heavy fetters whose looped-up chain clashed between his legs at every step. At sight of the balalaika in my hands he straightened himself a little, and a faint flush of color came into his face.

"'Here's your balalaika, Klochkof,' I said. 'We succeeded in finding one.'

"'Will Your Honor please let me take it?' he asked.

"'Certainly! Here!' and stepping forward I put it into his hands. He took it carefully, pressed it against his body, and stroked it gently, as if he were caressing a pet animal.

"'Well!' I said expectantly. 'Are you going to sing for us now?'

"'Why should n't I sing?' he replied, 'when I have a balalaika; but it 's years since I held one in my hands. Give me a little time for practice —three days, Your Honor—in three days I 'll learn to play it again, and then I 'll sing for you.'

"I consulted the warden in a whisper and he agreed to let Klochkof have the instrument for three days in his kamera. Then, turning to the prisoner, he said: 'All right, Klochkof! We 'll give you time for practice. Limber up your



fingers and show us what you can do. In three days we 'll send for you again.'

"'Grant me one more favor, Your High Nobility!' said the prisoner imploringly. 'I 'm afraid that if I play in the kamera, the boys will laugh at me and make fun of me. They may even do something to hurt the balalaika—break the strings, perhaps, or smash it altogether. Please put me into solitary confinement, Your High Nobility! Then I can practise in peace.'

"'I can't do that,' said the warden, frowning. 'The solitary confinement cells are all occupied.'

"'Perhaps there 's an empty *kartser* [dungeon] where you could put me,' suggested Klochkof diffidently.

"'Well, you *are* a crank!' replied the warden with a contemptuous laugh. 'You 're the first prisoner that has ever asked me, as a favor, to shut him up in a *kartser*. Why, you lunatic, you don't seem to realize what a *kartser* is. There 's nothing there to sit on, and not a glimmer of light. You won't find it much fun to stand up, or sit on a stone floor, for three days, in pitchy darkness, and all alone.'

"'It 's easier to play standing up,' replied Klochkof, 'and as for loneliness—there 'll be two of us; the balalaika and I.'

"'Have it your own way,' said the warden. 'If you want to play blindman's-buff with a balalaika in a *kartser,* I 've no objection. But don't whine to be let out, if you get tired of it, because I won't let you out. Let's see—to-day is Thursday. Sunday afternoon you 'll see God's light again, but not before.'

"The warden waved his hand in dismissal; the guard shouted: 'By the left, wheel! March!' and with a measured clashing of leg-fetter chains Klochkof disappeared.

"After dinner, on Sunday, I went to the prison, with my note-book and pencils, and the warden sent for the entombed balalaika-player. He was brought to a large empty room, adjoining the office, where there was ample air space, and where a writing table had been placed for me. The prisoner came in looking pale and worn, but not at all disheartened or depressed. His hair was in disorder; his long gray coat was soiled and rumpled; his eyes were half closed to exclude the unfamiliar light; and his person seemed to exhale a faint peculiar odor, like that of a damp cellar; but with these exceptions he was unchanged. I thought I could see the afterglow of recent excitement or exaltation in his tired face, but his demeanor was quiet and self-possessed.



The audience that awaited him consisted of two soldiers armed with rifles, two turnkeys with revolvers in their belts, the warden of the prison and myself. Holding the balalaika to his breast, the prisoner bowed to us respectfully and said: 'Shall I begin?'

" 'Whenever you 're ready,' I replied.

"It happened to be a bright, clear August day, and going to one of the windows, where the sunlight fell upon him, Klochkof picked out a plaintive melody on the strings of the balalaika and began to sing. His voice was a mellow tenor, not extraordinary in volume or compass, but sweet and sympathetic. At first, he did not greatly impress me—he seemed to lack confidence and spirit—but when, with a wonderfully brilliant balalaika accompaniment, he began the popular Siberian exile song, 'My Fate,' he seemed, suddenly, to become inspired, and sang with a sympathetic depth of feeling that was even more remarkable than the technical skill with which he gave it expression.

" 'The man is a born musician!' I said to myself. 'He could teach phrasing to many of our best operatic tenors.'

"But the singing—wonderful as it seemed to me in that place—was surpassed by the extraordi-

nary brilliancy of the accompaniment. The balalaika is a wretched musical instrument, at best, but in Klochkof's hands it became a mandolin played by an Italian master. His technique was something marvelous! If Troyanovski, the soloist in Andreyef's orchestra, is the Sarasate of the balalaika, Klochkof is its Paganini. Such balalaika playing—such playing on an instrument of any kind—one rarely hears.

"When the gifted convict finished his last song, I grasped his hand, and, in my enthusiasm, thanked him almost effusively.

" 'Please get the warden to let me keep the balalaika a little longer,' he whispered to me, while I was still holding his hand. 'Persuade him to leave it with me a day or two more.'

"I made the desired request, but the warden declared it absolutely inadmissible. 'It is against all rules,' he assured me, 'and I might have to answer for it to an inspector."

" 'Bring me the balalaika,' he said to Klochkof.

"Then there happened something that I still remember as astounding, tragic, and almost terrible. The quiet, submissive, undemonstrative convict suddenly became as fierce and menacing as a tigress about to be deprived of her young. His face lost every trace of color; his eyes seemed



to fill with blood and fire; and holding the balalaika to his breast with one hand, he threw himself into a fighting attitude, and cried hoarsely and fiercely: 'I 'll never give it up! You can't have it! I 'll kill the first man that tries to get it!'

"I was absolutely paralyzed with amazement.

" 'Take the balalaika away from the prisoner,' said the warden in a cold, stern voice.

"The soldiers and turnkeys, with their hands on their weapons, sprang toward the defiant convict, who stood motionless, with murder in his eyes, breathing heavily and clasping the balalaika to his breast. Before they reached him, he realized, even in his paroxysm of furious passion, that he could not successfully resist four armed men. Dropping the balalaika, he stood for an instant looking at it, with an expression of wild grief and misery in his face, and then, throwing himself on the floor, burst into a storm of convulsive sobs. Never in my life had I seen such agonized weeping. It was the expression not merely of disappointed expectation and thwarted impulse, but of all the hopeless misery of a wrecked existence. The loss of the balalaika brought to him a vivid realization of all that he had missed in life—love, freedom, music, happiness, everything—and the

agonized consciousness of irretrievable disaster was deepened and intensified by acute regret and unavailing remorse.

"The sobs and inarticulate cries of the prisoner finally became so wild and hysterical that the warden sent for the prison surgeon; but it was ten minutes before we could get the weeping and distraught man quiet. When, at last, he had recovered self-command, I thanked him again for singing, and told him that I should leave five rubles for him at the prison office.

"'Your Honor,' he said through his tears, 'I don't want money for that. Just let me take the balalaika once more—for a minute.'

"I gave it to him. He stroked it caressingly, pressed his lips to it twice, and then surrendered it. As the guards were about to take him away, he turned again and said: 'Please, Your Honor, grant me one favor more. When you get back to Russia, you may find yourself, sometime, in the province of Yaroslav. If you ever do, please go to the village church of Romanof-Borisoglebsk; light a candle before the portrait of the Holy Mother of God that hangs on the left side of the chancel; and have a mass said for the repose of the soul of—of—Marya Ivanovna!'

"He spoke the name with a half-strangled sob,



and seemed to be on the point of breaking down again; but in a moment he recovered self-control, and bowing low to me said: 'Good-by, Your Honor; God grant you a safe return to your home.'

"The guard threw open the door; the prisoner went out; and the clashing of his leg-fetter chain grew fainter and fainter as he marched down the corridor to the kamera of the *bez-srochni.* I never saw him again.

"Who was Marya Ivanovna, and what had been the convict's relations with her? Was the candle to be lighted, and the mass to be said, for the repose of the soul of the bride who had been killed with an ax, as she stood before the altar, in that village church of Romanof-Borisoglebsk?

"I never knew."





RUSSIAN "MOUSE TRAPS"





III

RUSSIAN "MOUSE TRAPS"

ALTHOUGH the peculiar form of police embuscade known as a "mouse trap" has had its fullest development and its widest application in Russia, it did not originate in that country, nor did it receive there its strikingly appropriate appellation. It was imported, a century or more ago, from France, and the name that it bears was given to it, in 1829, by Alexander Dumas. The distinguished French story-teller described it, in "Les Trois Mousquetaires," as follows:

"The invention of the mouse trap does not date from our days. As soon as societies, in process of formation, created police, the police, in turn, invented mouse traps. As our readers may not be familiar with the slang of the Rue de Jerusalem, and as it is fifteen years since we applied this term, for the first time, to the thing, we may be allowed, perhaps, to explain to them what a mouse trap is. When, in a house of any kind, an individual suspected of crime is arrested, the

arrest is kept secret; four or five men are placed in ambuscade in the first apartment, the door is opened to all who knock, it is then closed after them, and they are arrested; so that, at the end of two or three days, the police have in their power all the persons who are accustomed to visit the place. And that is a mouse trap."

Dumas does not explain that the first arrest is made, and the trap set, at a late hour of the night —generally between one and three o'clock A. M. —so that the "mice" will not become aware of it and avoid the dangerous locality. You may call upon a "politically untrustworthy" friend in the evening; drink tea with him; discuss the state of the country; and go home at midnight without having seen or heard anything to excite suspicion or suggest peril; but if you return to the same house or apartment early the next morning, you are liable to fall into a mouse trap, set by the police in the dead hours of the night. The trap, moreover, catches and holds every person who enters it, regardless of nationality, dress, social position, or official rank. Russian revolutionists are accustomed to assume all sorts of disguises, from the blue frock coat and wrinkled top-boots of the gendarmerie to the sword, epaulettes, and golden cords of the general staff; and if the Czar



himself, in the uniform of the Preobrazhenski Guards, should visit, incognito, a house in which a trap had been set, he would be arrested promptly and sent to the nearest *uchastok,* or precinct station-house, for identification. No discretionary power, of any kind, is given to the police officers in charge. The mice caught may not look at all like the mice for which the trap was set; but even if they appear to be ermine, or lizards, or small blind kittens, they must go to the *uchastok* for examination and judgment.

Some years ago, Mr. Baddeley, the enterprising and well informed St. Petersburg correspondent of the London *Standard,* happened to hear, one hot July morning, that at a late hour on the previous night, the police had made an attempt to arrest a number of nihilists who were holding a conspirative meeting in an apartment house situated near the intersection of the Gorokhovaya Street and the Kazanskaya. Resistance had been offered by the conspirators; a number of pistol shots had been exchanged; and one of the police officers, it was said, had been killed. Thinking that this revolutionary incident would afford interesting material for a letter to the *Standard,* Mr. Baddeley determined to visit the apartment where the fighting had occurred, pick

up such details as could be had, and get accurate "local color" for his story. Everybody in the neighborhood seemed to be afraid to give him information with regard to so dangerous a subject as the arrest of nihilists, and as he could not ascertain the number of the house in which the seditious meeting had been held, he had some difficulty in finding his way to the place. A street policeman finally showed him the house, and told him that the nihilist apartment was in the third story. Ascending two flights of rather dark stairs, he knocked at the first door that presented itself, with the intention of asking for further directions. Somewhat to his surprise, the door was opened promptly by a police officer.

"I 'm looking for the apartment where the nihilists were arrested last night," said the correspondent; "is this it?"

"Yes," replied the police officer.

"May I come in?"

"It is not forbidden," said the officer courteously, "Pazholuitia!" [Enter, please.]

"Thank you," said Baddeley, and removing his hat, he stepped into a rather large, simply furnished room, on whose hardwood floor there were a number of inexpensive rugs, and against whose walls hung a few engravings of scenery in



the Caucasus and a portrait of Herzen. This reception room, or parlor, opened into two or three smaller chambers, in one of which there was a bed that did not seem to have been recently occupied, and in another a circular, chair-surrounded table, a polished brass samovar, half a dozen tea glasses in filigree holders of plated silver, and two or three ash-receivers filled with unburned ends of cigarettes. The furniture everywhere was comparatively cheap and plain, and with the exception of the portrait of Herzen in the front room, there was nothing in the whole apartment to distinguish it from a hundred similar suites in that part of the city. The police officer went into all the rooms with the correspondent, and watched attentively the latter's movements; but he refused to be drawn into conversation, and in reply to every question with regard to the events of the previous night he replied briefly and formally, "Ne magoo znat" [I have no means of knowing].

After inspecting the apartment, and taking mental note of all the facts and details that he thought he could work into his description, Baddeley thanked the police officer for his courtesy and started for the door. The officer, however, interposed an arm and said firmly, "Ex-

cuse me, please, you must remain here. You were at liberty to come in, but you cannot go out."

"But I 'm the St. Petersburg correspondent of the London *Standard,*" explained Baddeley. "I merely came in to look at the place for the purpose of describing it in a letter to my paper."

"I have no means of knowing who you are," replied the officer; "that does n't concern me. My orders are to arrest and detain every person who comes here."

"But that 's absurd!" said Baddeley. "I 'm not a nihilist, nor even a Russian. I 'm an Englishman, and I came here merely to look around."

"I see that you are not a Russian," said the officer imperturbably, "and I presume you can convince the proper authorities that you are all right; but I must detain you here until I can send you to the *uchastok* under guard. They 'll find out there who you are. An officer has just gone to the station-house with another prisoner, and as soon as he returns he can take you."

Baddeley tried to argue the question, and to show the officer how preposterous it was to arrest a newspaper man, and a foreigner, who merely wished to get local color for a descriptive letter;



but the officer was inexorable, and finding that he had fallen into a mouse trap, Baddeley lighted a cigarette, seated himself on the low sill of one of the open windows, and amused himself by watching the passing droshkies, and listening to the discordant cries of the fruit peddlers in the street below. Presently, he saw his friend Dobson, the St. Petersburg correspondent of the London *Times,* walking along the Gorokhovaya and looking up at the houses, as if he were in search of something whose exact location he did not know.

"Hello, Dobson!" he hailed.

"Hello!" replied the *Times* man.

"Where are you going this hot day?"

"I 'm looking for that beastly nihilist apartment," replied Dobson. "Have you found it?"

"Yes," shouted Baddeley cheerfully, "it 's up here."

"Can I come up?"

"Certainly! Climb two flights of stairs and knock at the first door. It 's a mighty interesting place. I 'll show you the blood on the wall. I 'm going to make two columns out of it."

Congratulating himself on his good luck in coming across Baddeley, and in thus finding out where the nihilist apartment was, Dobson has-

tened upstairs, knocked at the door, and was admitted, as his colleague had been, without question. He, too, was a little surprised to find a police officer acting as janitor, but as Baddeley was still sitting on the window sill, coolly smoking a cigarette, he assumed, of course, that inspection of the apartment was permitted and that everything was all right. The two newspaper men then went through the rooms, examining the walls for bullet holes and blood, and even looking in the teapot on the samovar, to see whether the nihilists had finished drinking tea before they were arrested. The police officer went everywhere with them, and watched attentively all their movements; but he volunteered no information, and in reply to Dobson's questions merely repeated the dry official formula, "Ne magoo znat."

After fully satisfying his curiosity, the *Times* man said to his companion: "Well, I 've seen all I want to, let 's go"; and leaving the open window, where Baddeley had again taken his seat, he started for the door. To his great surprise, the police officer seized him by the arm and said: "Neilza!" [You can't go.]

"Zachem neilza?" [Why can't I?] demanded Dobson.



"Because you 're under arrest. I 'll send you to the station-house as soon as I can, but for the present you must remain here. There 'll be another officer here in an hour or so."

Dobson protested, stormed, and explained indignantly that he was the correspondent of the London *Times* and had come to the apartment merely for information; but his statements and remonstrances had no effect.

"You can explain everything at the station-house," said the officer; "I have no authority to release you."

"Are you under arrest, too, Baddeley?" inquired Dobson.

"Of course," replied the correspondent of the *Standard.* "You did n't suppose I was sitting in a third-story window, on a dirty noisy street, for fun, did you? I should have got out of here long ago if I could. I was pinched."

"Why did n't you tell me so when you hailed me in the street?"

"I 'm not an information bureau," replied Baddeley coolly. "You asked if you could come up, and I told you you could. You did n't say anything about going down. You wanted to see a nihilist apartment, did n't you? Well, you 've seen it."

"Yes, but I would n't have come up if I had known that it was a trap."

"Of course not," replied his colleague unsympathetically, "but when you investigate anything in this country you 've got to take your chances. The only safe way is to send somebody ahead to poke the trap with a stick."

The two correspondents were held in the nihilist apartment for an hour or more, and were then sent under guard to the precinct station-house. There they established their identity by summoning one of the secretaries of the British embassy, and after receiving a politely worded caution, tempered with expressions of official sympathy and regret, they were released.

When I returned to St. Petersburg, from my second Siberian expedition, mouse traps gave me more anxiety than all other forms of police activity taken together. I had brought with me from the trans-Baikal and the mines a large number of letters from political exiles to their relatives and friends, and these letters I had promised sacredly to deliver in person. Many of the writers had been forced, for years, to confine their correspondence with their families to postal cards, which they were compelled to submit to the police for censorship. Practically everything on



these cards, except the assurance of continued existence, was erased by the official censors through whose hands they passed, and the unfortunate exiles, longing for some better and freer means of communication, welcomed me, with pathetic eagerness, as a man who was going back to the civilized world and could take uncensored letters to the husbands, wives, parents and children who were dear to them. It was a penal offense to carry such letters, but I could not fairly ask exiles and convicts to put themselves in my power by giving me all the information I wanted, and then deny them a last opportunity, perhaps, to communicate freely with their relatives in European Russia. I knew that such letters would be a source of constant anxiety—and possibly of danger—but I never hesitated to take them. Many, if not most, of the persons to whom they were addressed were under suspicion of political untrustworthiness, and were liable at any time to arrest; and in attempting to deliver them personally, I ran the risk of falling into a mouse trap with the incriminating letters in my possession. I took every precaution that my own ingenuity and the experience of the exiles could suggest, but I never knocked at the door of an untrustworthy person without half expect-

ing that it would be opened by a police officer, who would politely invite me to come in. Then, too, in my search for information with regard to political conditions, I had to go to apartments where revolutionary work was actually being carried on, and these of course were particularly dangerous. One such apartment was occupied by a very intelligent and charming woman whom I shall call Madame Chartoriski. I had visited it several times, and had been repeatedly warned that I ran great risk in calling there. "We are distributing revolutionary literature from here," said the lady of the house, "and this is the headquarters of the Exile Red Cross. We may be arrested any night, and if you continue to come here, you must clearly understand that you are in danger of falling into a police ambuscade. We cannot warn you when to stay away, because we don't know when the blow will fall; but fall it undoubtedly will, sometime. I had a letter from an exiled friend, only last week, in which he reproached me for neglect of duty. 'You must be idle or timid,' he said, 'because if you were n't you would have been in Siberia long ago.' But we are not neglecting the work—we have simply had good fortune."

It would have been prudent to stay away from



this place, but Madame Chartoriski, who concealed and sheltered Stepniak after he assassinated General Mezentsef, was exceptionally well informed with regard to the whole revolutionary movement, and I could not afford to miss the facts and explanations that she was able to give me. My wife, however, felt so much anxiety for my safety that she finally prevailed upon me to let her accompany me, and the first visit that we made together to the revolutionary apartment on the Liteini Prospekt was the last. There was no *dvornik,* or janitor, at the street door, and as we entered it, we encountered a bearded man in a soft felt hat and dark civilian dress who was coming down the first flight of stairs. At sight of us, he stopped, stood for a moment in apparent irresolution, and then, turning quickly, ran up the uncarpeted steps and disappeared. As we passed the first landing, an unseen hand behind one of the closed doors made slowly three spaced knocks as if signaling to some one above or below. The knocks, and the behavior of the man on the stairs, were mysterious, if not disquieting; but it seemed to me quite as safe to go on as to turn, without apparent reason, and try to leave the building. If Madame Chartoriski had been arrested and a

mouse trap had been set in her apartment, we probably should not be allowed to escape, and precipitate flight would only show that we knew we were on dangerous ground. The door of the revolutionary apartment was at the head of the second flight of stairs. On all my previous visits, I had found it not only closed, but locked, and it was never opened until Madame Chartoriski and her associates had ascertained with certainty who was outside. On this particular day it was ajar, and that fact alone was sufficient to show that something had happened. We turned quickly and were just in the act of descending the stairs when a man in civilian dress threw the door wide open and demanded: "Shto vam oogodno?" [What do you want?] In the existing circumstances we did not want anything, but remembering that I had seen a physician's door plate on the first floor, I muttered something about looking for a doctor and continued to descend. The man came to the head of the stairs and watched us until we turned at the first landing, but made no attempt to detain us. Who he was, and what significance the signal knocks behind the closed door had, we never knew. All that we were able to learn was that Madame Chartoriski had found it extremely dangerous to



remain longer in the place where I first met her, and had removed to a remote part of the city, on the Finland side. What eventually became of her I do not know. Perhaps she eluded successfully the vigilance of the police—perhaps she moved, finally, to Siberia, where, according to her exiled correspondent, she had "long been due."

In every large Russian city, the police keep an alphabetical list of all persons who are believed to be in sympathy with the revolutionary movement, or who, for one reason or another, are regarded as "politically untrustworthy." Such persons are liable to be arrested on suspicion at any time, and are almost sure to be taken into custody after the assassination of a high official, when there is no clue to the assassin, and when the police hope to get a clue by a drag-net system of arrest and investigation. At such times, a hundred arrests or more are often made in a single night, and in the houses or apartments of perhaps half the prisoners mouse traps are set to catch all comers. The police in charge of the traps are strictly enjoined to send to the nearest precinct station-house every person caught, no matter what plausible account he may give of himself, and no matter what he may look like.

RUSSIAN "MOUSE TRAPS"

Revolutionists and terrorists often wear uniforms, and a man who declares that he is a colonel of gendarmes, or a general of division, may really be a dangerous conspirator in disguise. The instructions thus given to the trap-tenders are always implicitly obeyed, and they sometimes bring about results of an extraordinary and wholly unforeseen character.

On a certain night in March, the police, in one of their raids on the politically untrustworthy class, arrested in St. Petersburg a physician named Dr. Kadyan. A mouse trap was set in his house about two o'clock in the morning, and his family, of course, was prevented from communicating in any way with the outside world. His sister, Miss Kadyan, happened to be one of the principal teachers in a well known school for young women, patronized, and in part supported, by the Grand Duchess Ekaterina Mikhaelovna. On the 14th of March—the day that followed the arrest and the setting of the mouse trap—the school held its annual exhibition. The distinguished patroness herself was not present; but the relatives and friends of the pupils had assembled in large numbers, and on the stage of the exhibition hall, under draped flags and a portrait of the Czar, sat Actual State Councilor



Dmitrief, Government Inspector of Schools, who, in honor of the occasion, wore his full dress uniform and all his orders. The program announced that the exhibition would begin with a series of exercises by the class of Miss Irina Kadyan; but at ten o'clock—the hour of opening—Miss Kadyan had not made her appearance. After waiting for her ten or fifteen minutes, the lady principal of the school sent a pupil to the Kadyan house, with instructions to bring the teacher back with her, or ascertain the reason for her unexplained absence. The pupil of course fell into the mouse trap and failed to return. The audience waited, whispered, and watched the door; the Inspector of Schools fidgeted, twisted his watch chain, and gazed at the ceiling; and the lady principal, after explaining to His Excellency that Miss Kadyan must be seriously ill, sent a second pupil, post haste, to find out what had happened to the first. The mouse trap snapped again, and the second pupil was heard of no more. Suspecting, at last, that the police were responsible for these mysterious disappearances, and feeling sure that she could clear up any possible misunderstanding in which her teachers and pupils might be involved, the principal had a droshky called and proceeded to the scene of

action herself. But the mouse trap is no respecter of persons, and the lady principal fared no better than her messengers. She told the police in charge of the trap that she was the principal of the Grand Duchess Mikhaelovna's school; that it was the day of their annual exhibition; that she had left the Government Inspector of Schools fretting and fuming on the platform; and that if she were not released, there would be no exercises and the Grand Duchess would be greatly incensed. The police merely replied that they would send her to the precinct station-house as soon as possible, and that she could explain everything there.

The Government Inspector of Schools, left with an audience, a corps of teachers, and a school exhibition on his hands, grew more and more impatient and exasperated, and finally announced to the wondering and half-frightened assembly that there was apparently some idiotic misunderstanding, and that if they would be good enough to wait a few moments, he would go personally to the Kadyan house and clear it up. In his own mind he was satisfied that nothing short of police interference could have prevented the return of the lady principal, and he determined to show the guardians of law and



order that to break up an exhibition in the school of a Grand Duchess, and to put in a humiliating position an Actual State Councilor and a Government Inspector of Schools who was faithfully discharging his duty was a very serious matter. He called his droshky, drove hastily to the Kadyan house, burst in at the front door without knocking, and was arrested so promptly that it took his breath away.

"Why you —— —— ——!" he shouted furiously to the sergeant of police, as soon as he could recover himself, 'Do you know who I am? I 'm Actual State Councilor Dmitrief, Government Inspector of Schools and representative of Her Highness the Grand Duchess Ekaterina Mikhaelovna. How dare you put me under arrest! I 'll report your impertinence to His Majesty himself, and we 'll see whether you have authority to lay hands on an Actual State Councilor and break up an exhibition in the school of a Grand Duchess. The stripes shall be torn from your sleeve and you shall be thrown out into the street!"

The police officer trembled and turned pale at this fierce attack, but he had been repeatedly warned not to judge from appearances, and this, after all, might be a terrorist. They were some-

times equally impressive and furious. One of them, in the disguise of a gendarme officer, and with forged papers, had almost succeeded in getting the governor of Yakutsk to turn over to him the notorious political criminal Chernishevski.

"I 'm sorry, Your Excellency," he finally replied respectfully, "but I must obey my orders. I have n't the honor to know Your Excellency by sight, but even if I recognized you, I should be compelled to detain you. I will have Your Excellency escorted to the *uchastok* at once, and of course you will be immediately released."

The Inspector of Schools, still storming and threatening, went out, got into his droshky, and proceeded under guard to the station-house.

The audience in the exhibition hall, meanwhile, hardly knew what to do. That anything could have happened to the lady principal and the Government Inspector of Schools was almost inconceivable, and yet—they did not return. At the suggestion of one of the older teachers, a messenger was finally sent to the palace of the Grand Duchess Ekaterina Mikhaelovna to inform her that, within an hour, two pupils, the lady principal, and the Government Inspector of Schools, had disappeared in the house of Dr. Kadyan, and to ask her whether something could not be done



to clear up the mystery. The Grand Duchess immediately sent one of her couriers to the house to find out what had happened. The door opened to the courier's knock, and the mouse trap snapped on the fifth victim. By this time, however, the sergeant of police had become convinced that the callers from the school and palace of the Grand Duchess Ekaterina Mikhaelovna were not disguised revolutionists, and although, in detaining them, he had adhered faithfully to his instructions, he thought it prudent to go himself with the last of them to the *uchastok* and make such explanations as might be needed. In due course of time, all of the prisoners except Miss Kadyan were released, with profound apologies; but, meanwhile, the audience in the school hall had dispersed, and the exhibition had been indefinitely postponed.[1]

In Russia, mouse traps of the pattern described by Dumas were not, as a rule, baited. They were merely set in the runways that political "mice" frequented, or in the holes to which they were accustomed to go. If the mice fell into them, it was because they were unsuspecting

[1] The details of this story were given to me by a prominent member—at one time president—of the Free Economic Society, of St. Petersburg, the oldest scientific organization in Russia.—G. K.

or incautious, not because they were attracted by bait. There were, however, traps of another type, in which a lure was used, and these traps frequently caught cats, as well as mice. When General Alexander Zuroff was *gradonachalnik,* or prefect, of St. Petersburg, he was greatly troubled by his inability to discover the locations of two secret revolutionary printing offices, which were turning out large quantities of literature of an extremely "dangerous tendency." The police, from time to time, brought to him pamphlets, leaflets, and proclamations, which they had seized in midnight searches, and which bore the imprint either of the party of "The People's Will" or of the "Black Division"; but they could not tell him where these seditious publications originated. They had raided the whole politically untrustworthy class, and had searched every house in the city where it seemed at all probable that a printing press might be concealed; but their widely thrown drag-nets had brought in nothing, and the persons in whose possession the seditious literature had been found steadfastly refused to say where they obtained it.

In these circumstances, the idea occurred to General Zuroff that it would be a good plan to



open a decoy printing office of his own. By striking off revolutionary leaflets, and getting disguised police agents to distribute them with caution and secrecy among disaffected operatives in factories, he might be able to open communication with the real revolutionists who were engaged in the same work, and find out, through them, where the printing presses of The People's Will and the Black Division were situated.

There was great rivalry, at that time, between the two independent branches of the Russian secret service—the police and the gendarmes. Each tried to surpass the other in the discovery and frustration of political conspiracies, and neither made known to the other its methods or plans. General Zuroff therefore said nothing to General Drenteln, the Chief of Gendarmes, with regard to the decoy printing office, but quietly opened it, in a house on Little Garden Street, and, with the aid of disguised agents, began to strike off revolutionary leaflets, and to distribute them, with apparent caution and secrecy, among factory operatives registered in the police books as politically untrustworthy.

Although General Drenteln, the Chief of Gendarmes, had not been able to locate the printing presses of the People's Will and the Black Di-

vision, he very soon discovered the decoy plant of the police in Little Garden Street; and, supposing of course that it really was what it purported to be, he drew up a revolutionary proclamation of the most incendiary character; gave it to two long-haired detectives in soft felt hats, shabby coats, and green spectacles; and instructed the latter to take it to the "underground" printing office in Little Garden Street, and, if possible, get fifty copies of it struck off, to be used afterward as evidence. The disguised police agents in the Little Garden Street trap received the disguised detectives from the gendarmerie with feelings of satisfaction that they could hardly conceal. "At last," they thought, "we are on the right track. We 'll do this work, and when the revolutionists in green spectacles come for it, we 'll improve our acquaintance with them, secure their confidence, and gradually get into touch with the circle to which they belong. Some of their fellow conspirators higher up must know where the other printing offices are."

The disguised police agents promised to have the proclamations done by nine o'clock on the following evening; and at the appointed hour, the disguised gendarmes returned, received the copies, and were just in the act of paying for the



work when, at a given signal, half a dozen of their associates, in full uniform and with revolvers in their hands, burst in at the door, seized the disguised agents of the police, and rushed them off to prison. On the following morning, General Drenteln called upon General Zuroff and said to him, with an air of modest pride and satisfaction, "It gives me pleasure to inform Your Excellency that I have at last discovered one of the revolutionary printing offices that have given us both so much trouble. My men raided the place last night, found the press, obtained abundant evidence of criminal activity, and took into custody the men in charge."

General Zuroff, stunned by this unexpected announcement and chagrined at the triumph of his rival, leaned back in his chair and for a moment said nothing. Then, with an air of assumed indifference, he asked: "Where was it?"

"At No. 16 Little Garden Street," replied the Chief of Gendarmes.

General Zuroff revived. He himself had failed, but at least General Drenteln had not succeeded.

"I regret to inform Your Excellency," he said quietly, "that the printing office at No. 16 Little Garden Street was mine. I opened it a week or

two ago; and if this unfortunate misapprehension had not occurred, I should probably have succeeded in entrapping the men of whom we are in search. I shall have to ask Your Excellency to release my agents; they were acting under my orders." [2]

Russia now has a constitutional parliament, and the famous "Third Section," of which General Drenteln was chief, has been abolished; but mouse traps are still in use, and thousands of unwary citizens fall into them every year, and are sent to precinct station-houses for examination, merely because they call upon friends or acquaintances of whose arrest they are unaware. Ambuscades of this type are so useful, under the present régime, that they are not likely to be abandoned until martial law has been abolished and arrests are regulated by the civil code. A bill to secure inviolability of the person was laid before the Russian Duma in November, 1909, but it had been framed by the Government; it did not limit in any way the extraordinary powers given to the police under the provisions of martial law; and it was so manifestly a sham reform that even the conservatives voted against it, and

[2] The facts in this case are from General Zuroff himself.—G. K.



it was sent back to the committee that reported it. In that committee it still lies. Martial law is wholly incompatible with personal inviolability, and so long as two-thirds of the Russian people are governed by "Rules for Reinforced Defense" and "Rules for Extraordinary Defense," the administration will continue to make use of agents provocateurs and mouse traps.





A BODY, A SOUL, AND A PASSPORT





IV

A BODY, A SOUL, AND A PASSPORT

WHEN Thomas Bailey Aldrich was editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* in the early eighties he was accustomed to spend a part of every summer abroad. His annual excursions were generally short, and were confined, for the most part, to the well-known countries of Western Europe, but while he was planning one of his trips the idea occurred to him that it might perhaps be interesting to repeat a flying visit to Russia which he and Mrs. Aldrich had made some years before.

The terroristic campaign of the so-called nihilists in 1879–1880 and the assassination of Alexander II in 1881 had again attracted the attention of the world to the empire of the Czar, and it seemed to Mr. Aldrich that he might get in St. Petersburg and Moscow, even in a week or two, a better understanding than he then had of the Russian revolutionary movement, and at the same time increase his knowledge of a country

...land," looked up avail
his old passport to the State
renewal, had it viséed at the R
and started for St. Petersburg by
Hanover, Berlin, and Eydkuhnen

The passport on which Mr. an
traveled when they made their fir
sia was issued to "Thomas Baile
wife," but in renewing this docun
Department, through the error of
copyist, omitted the words "and wi
it cover the husband only.

Mr. Aldrich did not notice this o
to his departure, and even if he had
probably would have thought that a
himself would be quite sufficient to
identity of his wife, and that if he w
to the empire on it, she would be, a
course.

The Russian government, how
tomed to treat h



alities. In their domestic relations they might be one; but in their relations to the Foreign Office and the Passport Bureau they were two, and each must be provided with a "veed," or identification paper, setting forth name, nationality, age, height, color of eyes and hair, shape of nose and chin, and such other personal peculiarities as would definitely connect the document with the bearer and thus prevent illegal substitutions and transfers. In practice, and when there were no reasons for suspicion, the government often recognized and honored a joint passport, but in such cases it required a distinct statement that the document covered two persons and a certification that such persons were husband and wife.

When, therefore, Mr. Aldrich started for St. Petersburg with a wife, and a passport for himself only, he was as sure to get into trouble as he would have been if he had tried to cross the Atlantic with a wife and only one steamer ticket. Through a purely fortuitous combination of circumstances, however, the trouble did not come at the time or place where it might have been expected, viz., the Russian frontier. Passports are not required in western Europe, and Mr. and Mrs. Aldrich reached Eydkuhnen, the last Ger-

man railway station, without being required to show the single passport that was supposed to cover two. When, however, the train crossed the little brook that separates Germany from Russia and rolled into the Russian frontier station of Verzhbolov, or Wirballen, the impending trouble was due, and, from every official point of view, was absolutely unavoidable. The Queen of England and the Prince Consort could hardly get into the empire on a single passport, much less the editor of an English or American magazine and his wife.

Passengers bound northward and eastward alight from the German train at Verzhbolov and are guided by gendarmes into a large bare room opening on the railway platform, where a force of police officers and customs inspectors collects passports and receives baggage.

The central part of this room is inclosed by a low quadrangular counter separated into sections by slender posts bearing the letters of the alphabet from "A" to "Z." Around the square formed by this counter the baggage of the passengers is distributed for inspection, every trunk being placed under or near the letter that begins the owner's name.

In the center of the baggage-counter inclosure



is a bare wooden table, at which sit half a dozen uniformed police officers and secret-service detectives, whose business it is to examine passports.

As fast as the trunks are distributed in the lettered sections they are opened and inspected by the customs officers, and, at the same time, the passports are handed over the counter to the police, who take them to the central table, examine them carefully, make sure that they have been properly viséed, and see that the names of the bearers are not on the official list of persons who, for one reason or another, are not permitted to enter the empire.

As the room contains no seats, passengers are obliged to stand until their personal effects have been inspected and their passports examined and stamped. They then show their documents to an armed soldier, who stands at a side door, and are permitted to pass into the waiting room of the station, where there is a good restaurant, and where they may take dinner if they feel so inclined before getting into the train for St. Petersburg.

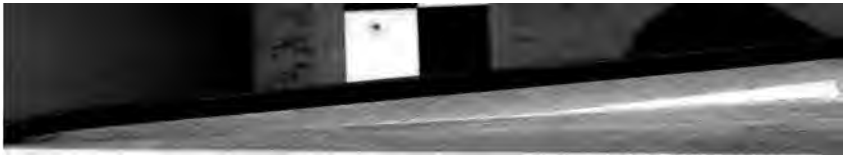
So far as passengers from western Europe are concerned, the threshold of the door where the armed soldier stands is the boundary line of Rus-

sia. While a traveler remains in the baggage-and-passport-inspecting department he is, constructively, in Germany; but as soon as he passes the soldier who guards the entrance to the waiting room he has the freedom of the Russian Empire, or, at least, such freedom as the empire affords.

When the German train arrived at Verzhbolov Mrs. Aldrich was suffering from a severe sick headache, and did not feel able to stand while the baggage and papers of a trainful of passengers were being examined. As soon, therefore, as her husband had handed in his passport and trunk keys, she asked him to inquire whether she might not be permitted to go into the waiting room, where she could find a seat and get a cup of tea.

Mr. Aldrich stepped to the counter and said in French to a good-looking young Russian officer: "My wife is suffering from a sick headache and is hardly able to stand. Can she not be allowed to go into the waiting room? I will remain here until the passports and baggage have been examined."

The officer looked at Mrs. Aldrich, saw that she was really ill, and assuming, of course, that she had a passport, which had already been handed in, and which her husband would get and return



to her after the examination, he replied, with a courteous and sympathetic bow: "Certainly. I'll arrange it at once"; and, calling a subordinate, who was standing outside the counter, he directed him in Russian to take the lady to the door and pass her through.

Thirty seconds later Mrs. Aldrich, without a passport, crossed the threshold which formed constructively the boundary line of Russia, and sank into a seat at a long, white restaurant table on which were vases of tastefully arranged flowers, crystal bowls of sparkling cut loaf sugar, ornamental baskets filled with delicately browned "boolkee" or Russian rolls, glittering tea glasses in silver holders, artistically stacked bottles of Kakhetinski wine from the Caucasus, and tall epergnes of polished fruit from the sunny hillsides of Asia Minor or the Crimea.

Recovering a little from the fatigue and the car sickness of the long day's ride, Mrs. Aldrich ordered a glass of fragrant Kiakhta tea and drank it slowly (in Russia), while her husband watched the inspection of his baggage and waited impatiently for his passport (in Germany).

About half-past five the customs officials finished the examination of trunks and returned the keys to their owners, and a few moments later a

police officer who had not seen Mr. Aldrich before and who did not know that he had a wife, came to the "A" section of the baggage counter, holding a passport above his head and calling out "Aldrich! Aldrich!" Mr. Aldrich, of course, answered promptly to his name and the police officer, after glancing first at the passport and then at its solitary owner, handed over the document with a courteous "Eezvoltia!" [Be good enough to receive] and returned to the table in the center of the enclosure. The passport had been stamped in dark blue ink with the words: "Shown at Verzhbolov, upon entering the Empire, July —, 188–." This stamp was equivalent to an order directing the armed sentry at the door to pass the bearer of the document into the waiting room.

Mr. Aldrich then rejoined his wife, and half an hour later they took seats in the Russian train and started for St. Petersburg, utterly unconscious of the fact that they had broken Russian law by making one passport serve for two persons, and had deceived and evaded the most vigilant and suspicious body of frontier police in all Europe.

But their trouble was yet to come. The scene of it had been shifted from Verzhbolov to St.



Petersburg, but it was still pending. There is a well-known peasant proverb which declares that "a human being in Russia consists of a body, a soul, and a passport"; and Mr. and Mrs. Aldrich were soon to learn that it is impossible to live, move, or have one's being in the empire of the Czars without possessing every one of these closely associated elements of human personality. A single passport, moreover, will not serve for two bodies and two souls, even though the two have been made one by the marriage ceremony.

After a long and uninteresting ride of twenty-four hours across the unfenced, scantily cultivated and poverty stricken plains of western Russia, Mr. and Mrs. Aldrich reached St. Petersburg; alighted from the train on a platform where the number of men in uniform seemed to be out of all proportion to the number in civilian dress; gave their hand baggage to a bearded hackman in a long-skirted, sash-encircled coat, and a stiff, low-crowned felt hat; took their seats in a one-horse droshky that seemed hardly bigger than a baby wagon for two-year-old twins; and jolted away over the rough cobblestone pavements to the Hotel d'Angleterre [I cannot now remember whether Mr. Aldrich told me that they went to the Hotel d'Angleterre or the Hotel de

the police station of the Ac
cinct for registry. When Mr. Aldr
his single passport the manager sai
be necessary to have madame's also."

"But," replied Mr. Aldrich, "mac
wife, and is included in my passport;
any of her own."

The manager shook his head and sa
did not think the police would be sati
one passport for two people.

"Why not?" inquired Mr. Aldri
crossed the frontier together on one pas
it had n't been all right they would n't
us in."

The manager still seemed to be dou
as he had no reply ready for this argu
did not himself understand how they
ceeded in getting across the frontier, h
passport, bowed, and withd---



names of guests are "chalked up" as they arrive. Whether this is meant to be a convenience for persons wishing to know who are staying in the hotel, or whether it is intended to facilitate the work of the officials whose duty it is to keep track of strangers, I do not know; but, in either case, it serves as a register, which passers-by may inspect without going beyond the front door.

The police of the Admiralty precinct were not long in discovering that the blackboard of the Hotel d'Angleterre bore the names of two persons who called themselves "Aldrich," while only one "Aldrich" passport had been sent to the precinct station-house for registry.

This, clearly, was a matter that needed investigation. It might be a new stratagem of the nihilists—an attempt to shelter a politically dangerous Russian woman, possibly a bomb-thrower, under the name and passport of an American sympathizer. It was well known, even in Russia, that among the residents of Boston, New York, and Chicago there were all sorts of American citizens, from politically untrustworthy Polish refugees to Russian traitors and Jewish anarchists. A "bird" of such feather might easily come to Russia to help on "the cause," and might try to shelter under his wing

a female nihilist, who, if her real name were known, would be liable to immediate arrest. At any rate, the woman must be satisfactorily accounted for in some way. She could not have come with the man from the United States, because the frontier police never would have permitted her to enter the empire without a passport. "Thomas Bailey Aldrich," alone, might be a commercial traveler or an innocent Cook's tourist, but "Thomas Bailey Aldrich" plus an unexplained woman formed an extremely suspicious, if not a criminal, combination.

Before Mr. and Mrs. Aldrich had fully recovered from the fatigue of their long journey across Europe a boy appeared at their door with the announcement that a police officer from the Admiralty precinct was below and wanted to see them.

"Send him up," said Mr. Aldrich, with the prompt decision of a man who has never had reason to dodge the police; "he probably wants further information about that confounded passport."

In a few moments the manager appeared in a state of obvious perturbation, and ushered in an officer in blue uniform, who glanced sharply at



Mrs. Aldrich, and then said, bowing courteously to her husband, "Excuse me, please; I have been sent to get the lady's passport."

"Tell him," said Mr. Aldrich to the manager, "that the lady is my wife, and that she has n't any separate passport."

"Where did the lady deign to come from?" inquired the officer, framing his question with a scrupulous observance of every Russian form of courtesy.

"She came from Boston with me," replied Mr. Aldrich.

"In what way did she see fit to cross the frontier without documents?" persisted the officer.

"Documents!" exclaimed Mr. Aldrich impatiently. "I 've got a passport, have n't I? And she is my wife. She crossed the frontier with me and nobody said a word about separate documents for her."

"It is strictly forbidden," said the officer impressively. "No lady is allowed to cross the frontier without a passport. Madame cannot be in Russia without the permission of the Verzhbolov police indorsed on a proper document."

"But that 's all foolishness!" cried Mr. Aldrich hotly. "My wife *is* in Russia, and the Verzhbo-

lov police let her in on my passport. They know their business, don't they? And, if not, whose fault is it?"

The officer evidently regarded further argument as unprofitable, and, taking a memorandum book from his pocket, made a brief note in it and said: "It will be my duty to report that monsieur came into the empire at Verzhbolov on the —th of July, with an American passport, properly indorsed, and that madame is pleased to be in his company at the Hotel d'Angleterre, St. Petersburg, without documents of any kind." And, replacing the memorandum book in his pocket, he bowed politely again and withdrew.

Mr. Aldrich was well aware, of course, that this would not be the end of the passport misunderstanding, and he was not surprised, therefore, when, half an hour later, the police officer reappeared and said, with formal courtesy, "The Chief of Police asks that you will be good enough to accompany me to his office."

"I suppose that is equivalent to an order for my arrest," said Mr. Aldrich to the manager; "but could anything be more stupid? The police at the frontier let us in on one passport, and then the St. Petersburg police arrest us because we have n't two. If we were traveling with a baby,

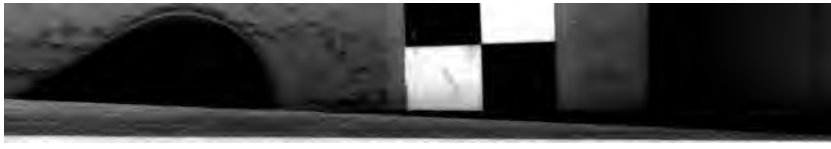


I presume they'd want a third. Item: One baby; features undeveloped; stature, knee-high to a grasshopper; name, not yet decided upon; occupation, tourist, chaperoning his parents; but what preposterous nonsense! I wonder if the Chief of Police will put brass tags on us!"

Mr. Aldrich, his courier and the officer, then descended the stairs to the front entrance; passed the blackboard whose inscription "Aldrich 2" had first called attention to the numerical discrepancy between bodies and passports; took seats in droshkies, under the curious scrutiny of three or four Russian bystanders who whispered "politicheski" [politicals] as they passed; and were driven to the office of the Chief of Police. There they found a middle-aged, uniformed official, with a severe countenance and short upstanding hair, who was sitting at a flat-topped desk, receiving reports from three or four police officers and detectives, who stood in respectful attitudes under a large oil portrait of the Czar.

Requesting his involuntary guest from the United States to take a seat, the bristle-haired official, addressing Mr. Aldrich through his courier, began his examination as follows:

"Do you understand Russian?"



"Not a word," replied Mr. Aldrich.

"What is your name?"

"Thomas Bailey Aldrich."

"Your passport states that you are an American citizen; what is your place of residence in America?"

"Boston, Mass."

"Have you ever been in Russia before?"

"I have; I spent a few days here some years ago."

"Ah! Then this is not your first visit. Tourists don't often come to Russia twice."

"I should n't think they would," remarked Mr. Aldrich dryly, "if it 's your practice to arrest all who come a second time."

"Are your visits to Russia made for business purposes?"

"Fortunately they are not. Are business men under suspicion? I thought only authors, students, and Jews were arrested at sight."

"Nobody is arrested who obeys the laws," said the official severely. "What is your occupation?"

"To this question," said Mr. Aldrich in telling the story afterward, "I did n't know exactly what reply to make. I thought of calling myself a poet; but I wasn't at all sure that my claim to



that distinction would be universally recognized. In Boston, at least, there were differences of opinion with regard to it. So I finally described myself modestly as an editor."

This reply seemed to excite more interest than the fact itself warranted. The group of officers exchanged significant glances, and in their half-whispered comments Mr. Aldrich caught the word "zhoornalist." Realizing too late that it was a mistake to call himself an editor in a country where the press was so largely revolutionary, he hastened to explain that although he was a "zhoornalist," he was not a political "zhoornalist," but the editor of a literary magazine, which had never made any attempt to cover the field of foreign politics. This, he thought, would set matters right and prevent any possible misunderstanding as to his purpose in visiting Russia. To his great surprise, however, this reply seemed to make matters worse. The Chief of Police turned on him quickly and said:

"Did n't you tell me a minute ago that you were wholly ignorant of Russian—that you did n't know a word of it?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Aldrich, "and I don't know a word of it."

"But you understood what we were saying

about your profession, although the interpreter did n't translate it to you."

"I caught the single word 'zhoornalist,' and that is so much like our corresponding English word that I recognized it. I did n't understand anything else that you said."

The Chief of Police transfixed the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* with a piercing glance of scrutiny, but for a moment said nothing. Then, apparently, he thought of a test that would conclusively settle the question of Mr. Aldrich's acquaintance with Russian. If he knew anything at all of that language, he never could stand being grossly insulted in it. A man may have self-control enough to refrain from answering an insult with a blow, but when he is called a swindler, a liar, and a thief he will react perceptibly in some way, provided the words convey any meaning to his mind.

Watching Mr. Aldrich intently, the Chief of Police said slowly in a level monotone and without emphasis: "Gdai tee nashol ettu babu, moshenik tee etakoi? Kak tee smeyesh pokazatsa v' poradochnoi gostinitze s' baboi oo kotoroi dazhe passporta nyett? Ya tebia pashloo v' tiurmoo, tee s— s—, shtob droogoi ras tee ne smiel obmaneevat nachalstva." ["Where did you pick



up that woman, you lying swindler? How dare you show yourself in a respectable hotel with a woman who has n't even a passport? I 'll send you to jail, you —— ——, so that another time you 'll know better than to try to deceive the authorities."]

"What does he say?" inquired Mr. Aldrich, turning to his courier with a cheerful air of expectant interest.

But the courier was evidently in distress. His face was flushed, and little drops of perspiration appeared on his forehead.

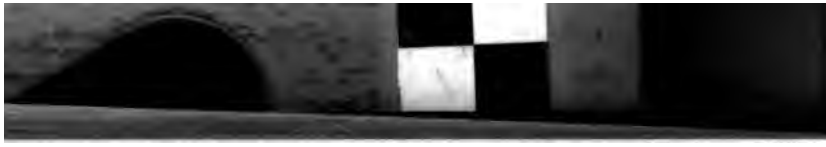
"It 's nothing—nothing at all," he stammered. "I don't know how to—but don't pay any attention—he was talking to himself. You don't have to answer—it 's of no consequence—I 'll tell you later."

The Chief of Police, having thus satisfied himself, experimentally, that Mr. Aldrich knew no Russian, proceeded with his examination as follows:

"What is the object of your present visit to Russia?"

Mr. Aldrich might have replied that he was in search of local color for a poem to be entitled "God Save the Czar" [1] but he contented himself

[1] He wrote this poem after his return from Russia. Its



with the statement that he merely wished to see the country and the people.

"You have said that the lady who accompanies you is your wife."

"She is."

"Did she come from America with you?"

"She did."

"How did she get across the frontier without a passport?"

"She crossed on my passport, which includes us both."

"But the frontier police do not allow two persons to enter the empire on one passport."

"They did allow it in this case."

"Was madame with you when you showed your passport to the sentry at the door of the waiting room at Verzhbolov?"

Suddenly it flashed upon Mr. Aldrich that his wife was not with him when he passed the sentry —she had been allowed to precede him because she was ill. Neither was she with him when the

nature was such that it would have made another visit to the empire inexpedient, if not impracticable. He also began a Russian story, to be entitled "The Little Blue Coupe," but whether he ever finished it or not, I do not know. It does not appear in his published works. The subject was suggested by the bullet-pierced coupe in which the Czar was riding when an attempt was made to assassinate him.—G. K.



police officer came to the baggage counter, holding a paper above his head and calling out "Aldrich! Aldrich!" That happened in Germany and Mrs. Aldrich was already drinking tea in Russia. She had crossed the frontier on the passport of a sick headache!

When Mr. Aldrich, with evident frankness and sincerity, made this explanation to the Chief of Police the latter modified a little the severity of his demeanor. Perhaps, after all, these travelers were not nihilistic wolves in sheep's clothing. The explanation seemed to show inexcusable if not incredible carelessness on the part of the frontier police, but it was plausible—very plausible. Pending verification of the story, however, it was clearly his duty to detain both of the suspects. If the woman were released she might suddenly disappear, and then he would be held responsible for any crime that she might subsequently commit.

After briefly exchanging impressions and opinions with the other officers who were present the Chief of Police turned again to Mr. Aldrich and said, with a noticeable access of courtesy: "I regret to subject you to temporary inconvenience, but our regulations with regard to passports are very strict, and I shall have to detain you and

madame until I can communicate with the frontier police at Verzhbolov."

"May I write a note to the American Minister?" inquired Mr. Aldrich.

"That is not forbidden," replied the Chief of Police, with an air of surprise. "Are you personally acquainted with the Minister?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Aldrich.

"And does his Excellency, the Minister, know madame?"

"Not yet, but he will when I present her to him."

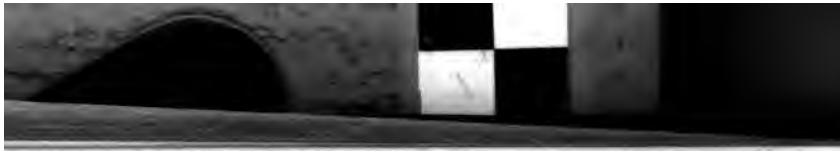
"Why, that simplifies the whole matter," said the Chief of Police, with a forced smile of seeming friendliness and cordiality. "His Excellency, the Minister, can issue a passport to madame at once, and then her position in St. Petersburg will be quite legal. This is evidently an unfortunate misunderstanding, due to madame's sick headache and to the inexcusable carelessness of our frontier police. They should not have allowed you to proceed until they had explained to you that a passport for a husband does not cover a wife unless she is specifically mentioned and described in it. But it was an accident—a chance combination of circumstances—for which monsieur and madame are not at all to



blame. Will it be convenient for you to go to the legation now?"

"The sooner the better," replied Mr. Aldrich.

The relieved "suspect" then went to the hotel for his wife, and, accompanied by the same officer who had first visited them, they drove to the American Legation, where they surprised Minister Hunt by informing him that they were under arrest for lack of "documents." Would he not be good enough to legalize Mrs. Aldrich's position, and complete her personality, by providing her body and soul with a passport? The Minister welcomed them cordially; gave Mrs. Aldrich a certificate of nationality and personal identity, duly authenticated by the seal of the legation, and expressed the hope that, as soon as they should have the freedom of the city, they would do him the honor of dining with him. As soon as the matter had been satisfactorily arranged, the police officer released Mr. and Mrs. Aldrich from custody, and they drove back to the Hotel d'Angleterre, congratulating themselves upon their escape from the widespread net of Russian passport laws and police regulations. They were not arrested or questioned again, but they had good reason to believe that, throughout their subsequent stay in the empire, they were



constantly under secret police surveillance, and they did not feel wholly free from anxiety and apprehension until they recrossed the German frontier.

In every large Russian prison, there is a row of gloomy kameras [cells holding from ten to fifty prisoners], intended for vagrants, tramps, and unidentified wanderers over the face of the earth. In capital letters, above the door of each of these kameras, is the single word "Bezpassportni" [passportless]. If the editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* and Mrs. Aldrich had happened to go directly from the German frontier to Novgorod, Kiev, Tver, or any provincial town where the United States had no diplomatic representative, their bodies and souls would probably have spent the night in one of these cells, while their single passport awaited further investigation in the "suspect" file of the local police.



THE ESCAPE OF PRINCE KRAPOTKIN





V

THE ESCAPE OF PRINCE KRAPOTKIN

IN originality of conception and ingenuity of execution, the escape of Prince Krapotkin from the prison of the Nikolaievsk Military Hospital in St. Petersburg in 1876 is probably unparalleled in prison annals. Twelve conspirators outside the prison took part in it, but not one of them was ever arrested or suspected, although many of them were subsequently banished to Siberia for other political offenses. The escape was made in broad daylight, about five o'clock in the afternoon, in the presence of three armed soldiers, and with such novel accessories as cherries, opera-hats, a louse, music, a black mare, and a microscope. The chances were at least ten to one that it would fail, notwithstanding the extraordinary ingenuity with which it was planned; but every device and stratagem worked perfectly, and the liberated prisoner dined that night in Donon's restaurant, the most fashionable in St. Petersburg, while the entire

police force of the capital was ransacking the city in search of him. Nobody even imagined that he would be shrewd and bold enough to take his dinner in so public a place, and not a single detective looked for him there, although search was made in scores of other places, and every exit from the city was so carefully guarded that a mouse could hardly have crept through unobserved.

Prince Pierre Krapotkin, the hero of this extraordinary jail-delivery, is a member of one of the oldest noble families in Russia, and was born in Moscow on the ninth of December, 1842. He received his early education in one of the *gymnasia* of his native city, and from there he was sent to the School of Pages in St. Petersburg, where at that time the sons of wealthy families of the nobility were trained for a military career. In very early youth he showed an adventurous spirit and a love of natural science, and when he was graduated from the School of Pages, and was permitted to choose the branch of the army in which he would serve, he asked for and received an appointment as first lieutenant in the Ussuri regiment of Amur Cossacks, which was then stationed in the east-Siberian territory of Transbaikalia. Three or four weeks later he started



for his field of service, and early in July, after a journey of nearly four thousand miles with post-horses, he reached Irkutsk, and reported to General Kukel, the governor-general's chief of staff. Curiously enough, the first duty assigned to him was an investigation of the east-Siberian prisons. He little thought, while he was noting in his memorandum-book the hardships and privations of convict life in Transbaikalia, that in less than twelve years he himself would be deprived of his liberty and would be threatened with incarceration in one of the very prisons he was investigating.

During the five years of his military service, Krapotkin made many long and difficult journeys on horseback through eastern Asia, exploring the wildest mountain fastnesses of Manchuria and Transbaikalia, and writing for the Imperial Geographical Society full descriptions of the unknown regions that he visited. When, therefore, he returned to St. Petersburg in 1867, he had an established reputation as an explorer and scientist, although he was only twenty-five years of age.

His experience and observations in Siberia had so increased his interest in science and so broadened his views of social and political problems

that he was unwilling to remain longer in the service of a government whose methods he disapproved, and in 1867 he resigned his commission and entered the St. Petersburg University as a student, with the intention of fitting himself more thoroughly for scientific work. His father, who had opposed his resignation from the army, would not give him any financial assistance; but the young scientist managed to support himself by teaching and writing for the press until he completed his studies. The Imperial Geographical Society then elected him secretary of its physical-geography section, and sent him to Finland to make a study of that country's geological structure and glaciers.

At that time it was his ambition to be appointed to the general secretaryship of the Geographical Society, a position which would give him congenial employment and at the same time assure him a livelihood. The coveted appointment was tendered to him while he was in Finland, but in the meantime he had become so deeply interested in the condition of the oppressed Russian peasants and in the movement for their enlightenment and emancipation that when the offer was finally made, he declined it, in order that he might be free to work for an object

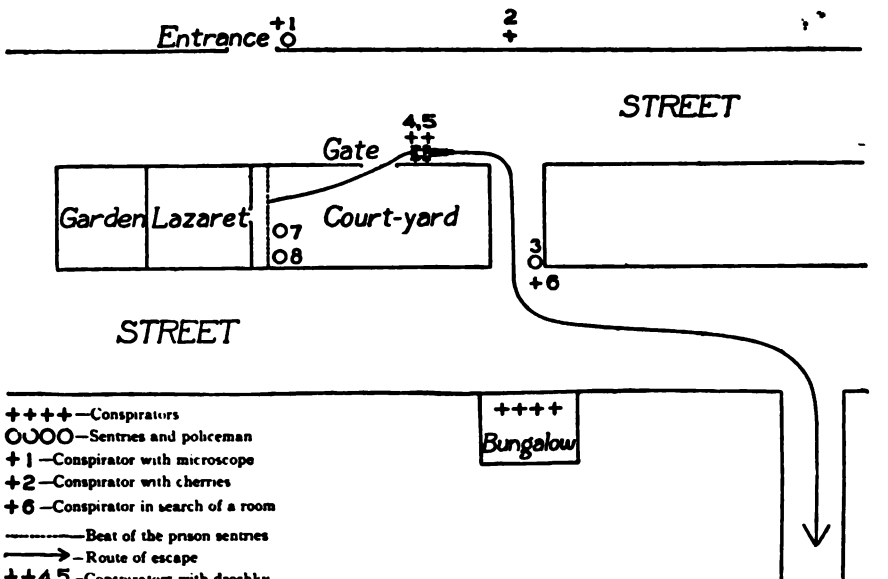


that seemed to him even more important than the advancement of science. The death of his father, General Krapotkin, which occurred shortly afterward, put him in possession of a large fortune, and finding himself relieved from the necessity of seeking remunerative employment as a means of self-support, he determined to devote himself wholly to the cause of Russian freedom. Under the assumed name of Borodin he joined a Socialistic circle organized in St. Petersburg by Nicholas Tchaykovsky, and began to distribute forbidden literature to the peasants in the provinces, and to give surreptitious talks to working-men in the factories, on the state of the country and the necessity for a readjustment of social and political conditions.

In those days the life of an agitator or propagandist outside the walls of a prison was very short; and in 1874, at the age of thirty-two, Krapotkin was arrested and thrown into the fortress of Petropavlovsk. In most civilized countries, persons accused or suspected of crime are brought into court for preliminary examination soon after their arrest, and are indicted and tried within a reasonable time; but in Russia, where there is no writ of habeas corpus, political offenders are often taken into custody on mere

suspicion, and are held in solitary confinement for two or three years while the police look for incriminating evidence against them. In Krapotkin's case, the "preliminary investigation" lasted two years, and during the whole of that time the prisoner lay in a dark and damp casement of the fortress, without legal counsel and without any means of compelling the authorities to hasten their proceedings. At the request of the Imperial Geographical Society, of which he was still a member, he was permitted to have writing materials, and in the twenty-four months of his confinement he wrote the greater part of his most important scientific work—a treatise on the glacial period in northern Europe and Asia.

Long before the end of the second year of his imprisonment his health began to fail under the bad sanitary conditions of his life, and in June, 1876, when his strength had been greatly reduced by scurvy, and when it was thought that he could not live more than a few months, he was transferred to a small prison connected with the Nikolaievsk Military Hospital, in the northern outskirts of the city. This prison was primarily intended for the detention and treatment of military criminals taken ill while awaiting trial; but it was also used occasionally for political



PLAN OF PRINCE KRAPOTKIN'S ESCAPE

Based on a drawing made for Mr Kennan in Siberia, by one of the participants in the escape.

offenders whose health had broken down in other prisons where the conditions of life were more trying.

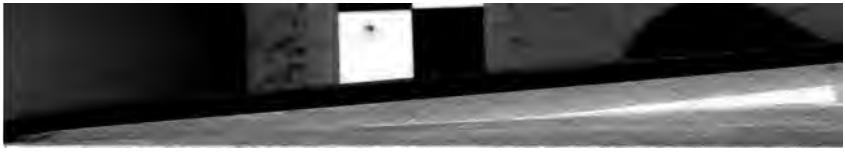
So long as Krapotkin remained in the fortress of Petropavlovsk, it was virtually impossible for his friends to set him free or even to communicate with him; but as soon as he was transferred to the less carefully guarded prison of the military hospital, they began to consider plans for his liberation. Their first step was to make a careful study of his environment. The building in which he was confined stood directly opposite the military hospital, on the other side of the street, and was used mainly as a sort of lazaret for sick or convalescent soldiers awaiting trial on criminal charges. Although it occupied a large part of the space between two parallel streets, it had no opening on either of them, and could be entered only through a grassy yard, two hundred yards long and half as wide, which was inclosed by a wooden stockade, and which communicated with the street by means of a heavy gate large enough to admit wagons. This yard was used as a place of deposit for the hospital's winter supply of wood; but it also served as an exercise-ground for convalescent prisoners, who were allowed to walk in it, one at a time, under the



supervision of armed sentries. Outside the stockade, at the eastern end of the yard, was a narrow cross lane uniting the two streets between which the prison was situated, and directly opposite the southern end of this lane stood an unoccupied dwelling-house, or bungalow, the upper windows of which commanded a view not only of the lane, but of the whole prison yard.

After making a careful survey of the prison and its environment, the conspirators proceeded to open communication with Krapotkin. This they succeeded in doing through one of the lazaret guards, whom they induced to carry notes written in cipher between them and Krapotkin. For a time neither the prisoner nor his friends could think of any plan of escape that gave promise of success; but while they were carrying on their correspondence with regard to ways and means, an event occurred that gave them a suggestion. The authorities of the military hospital began to lay in their winter supply of firewood. This, perhaps, would have had little significance if the wood had been stored in or about the hospital itself; but it was not. It was taken into the spacious yard of the lazaret and piled against the stockade at the eastern end of the

inclosure. In order to permit the entrance of the wood carts, the street gate was opened at short intervals daily for several weeks, and was frequently left open for an hour at a time while the drivers of the carts unloaded and piled their wood. In any other than a hospital prison, this gate would undoubtedly have been guarded by a sentry; but inasmuch as the occupants of the lazaret were all weak from sickness, it was not thought likely that they would attempt to escape even through an open gate. Day and night two sentries paced back and forth in front of the prison door, and when the convalescent prisoners were allowed, one at a time, to walk for exercise in the yard, they were incessantly watched, and were restricted to the path worn out in the grass by the sentries' feet. They would have to run a hundred yards in order to reach the gate, and even if sick men were able to do this, they would almost certainly be overtaken by the sentries before they could get out into the street. The risk of opening the gate, therefore, or even of leaving it open, seemed to the prison authorities so trifling as to be negligible. Krapotkin's friends, however, estimated the chances differently. They believed that if an unfettered prisoner should make a dash for the gate at an opportune



time, when neither of the two sentries was near him, it was not at all improbable that he might outstrip pursuit and reach the street in safety. Of course one of the sentries might shoot him, but this risk would have to be taken. Krapotkin was not so likely to be shot as an ordinary prisoner would be, because he was known to be a political offender of high rank and position, whom it would be unsafe to kill without express orders. Then, too, the sentries would confidently expect to overtake and recapture alive a man who had recently left a hospital bed and who was presumably utterly incapable of violent physical exertion. Krapotkin, however, was not so weak as he seemed to be. A month of good air and nourishing food had largely restored his strength, and when the dash for the gate was proposed to him by his friends outside, he assured them that he felt quite capable of undertaking it, and that he believed he could reach the street in safety. This feature of the plan was therefore agreed upon. In the course of his daily walk between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, Krapotkin was to watch for an opportunity to dart through the gate when it should be left open by incoming wood carts, and his friends outside were to have a fast horse and a vehicle waiting

for him on the prison side of the street, and as near to the gate as possible.

There were three serious dangers, however, which would have to be guarded against. The street upon which the prison yard opened ran eastward into the northern end of the Nevskii Prospekt, and it was not thought prudent to try that route. The fugitive, therefore, would have to turn into the narrow lane at the eastern end of the yard, cross through it to the next parallel street, and then take another lane leading to an unfrequented part of the suburbs. This, however, was precisely the route followed by the wood carts, and at the critical moment the latter might obstruct or block the way. The first lane, moreover, and the streets that it united were included in the beat of a policeman who was on duty every afternoon, and who might be roused to decisive action by the hue and cry that would follow the escape. This policeman, therefore, must be removed. Finally, an armed sentry stood at the entrance to the military hospital, just across the street from the prison, and there was danger that he might shoot either at Krapotkin as the latter emerged from the gate or at the horse that carried him away. If possible, therefore, this sentry must be temporarily disarmed.



THE ESCAPE OF PRINCE KRAPOTKIN

The next step in the plot of the conspirators was to make the sentries and the prison authorities so familiar with the vehicle to be used that they would not regard it with suspicion when it should wait for Krapotkin in front of the gate. Two weeks before the day fixed for the escape, a highly polished and fashionable droshky, drawn by a stylish black mare and driven by a coachman in livery, brought to the entrance of the military hospital a richly dressed lady and gentleman, evidently persons of wealth and rank, who had apparently come to the hospital to see or inquire about some sick officer in whom they were interested. Both alighted and entered the immense building, while the coachman, in order to make room for any vehicle that might come later, drove ahead a little, and stopped to wait nearly in front of the sentry-box. Ten or fifteen minutes later the gentleman and lady came out of the hospital, reëntered their vehicle, and were driven away in the direction of the Nevskii Prospekt. The gentleman was Dr. Orest Edward Veimar, a wealthy surgeon of St. Petersburg, who thought out most of the stratagems of the plan and took the leading part in its execution; the lady was an intimate personal friend of Krapotkin; and the coachman was a member of the Tchaykov-

sky Socialistic circle to which Krapotkin belonged.

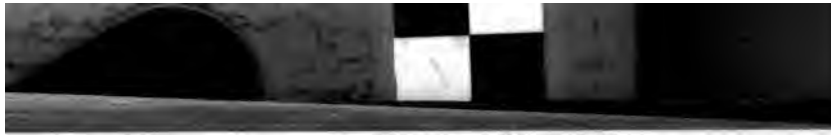
Every day or two thereafter, for a whole fortnight, Dr. Veimar and his companions repeated this manœuver, until the sentries and prison authorities finally became so accustomed to seeing this droshky bring a lady and gentleman to the military hospital that they paid no further attention to it. At first the coachman waited for his passengers just beyond the hospital entrance and on that side of the street; but in the second week, when everybody had become familiar with the vehicle, he ventured to cross over and wait on the other side, near the gate of the prison yard. Sometimes Dr. Veimar went into the hospital with the lady who accompanied him, sometimes he remained outside in the droshky; but before the end of the second week nobody noticed what he did or where the droshky waited. The vehicle and its occupants had ceased to attract attention and had become a semi-permanent feature of the environment.

While Dr. Veimar and his associates were thus familiarizing the prison authorities and the sentries with the vehicle to be used, the other conspirators were finding out who owned the unoccupied bungalow south of the prison yard, devising



a scheme for disarming the sentry at the hospital door, and investigating the life and circumstances of the obnoxious policeman. The bungalow was found to be for rent, and the conspirators promptly took a lease of it and established themselves securely in a position from which they could overlook the prison yard, the transverse lane, and both the streets into which the lane opened. The policeman proved to be a quiet, middle-aged man who had a house in the neighborhood, and who eked out a small salary by renting rooms to respectable persons of moderate means in the social class to which he belonged. One of his rooms was vacant, and the conspirators ascertained what it was like and how much the owner expected to get for it. Through the friendly soldier in the lazaret who carried notes for them, they also found out whose turn it would be to take sentry duty at the door of the military hospital on the day fixed for the escape, and how the man could best be approached.

When all these preliminaries had been arranged, Krapotkin's friends notified him that from half-past four to half-past five o'clock on the afternoon of July 12, a droshky with a fast horse would wait for him just outside the gate of the prison yard. When in the course of his

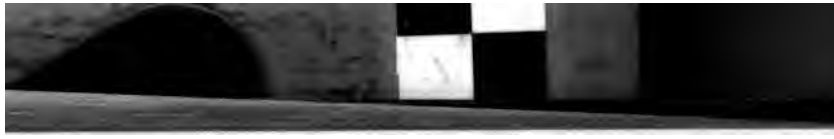


walk he was ready to risk the dash for the gate, he was to take off his hat. If at that time everything had gone satisfactorily outside, he would hear the music of a violin played softly near an open window in the bungalow that his friends had leased. So long as the music continued he was to understand that the way outside was clear, and that he was at liberty to make the rush for the gate at the first favorable opportunity; but if the music should cease, he must take it as an indication of unforeseen trouble, and wait. The last instructions given him were: "Once in the street, don't give yourself up. There will be friends to defend you in case of need."

About four o'clock on the afternoon of July 12 the conspirators outside the prison made their final dispositions. Some of them hired and carried away every public vehicle standing within a distance of half a mile, so as to leave the prison authorities no means of swift pursuit; some stationed themselves along the line of the route followed by the woodcarts; and some took their places at the windows of the bungalow that they had rented, and watched the military hospital, the prison yard, and the streets. At half-past four the well-known droshky made its seventh or



eighth appearance at the door of the military hospital. One of its occupants—the lady who had so often been seen before—alighted and entered the building, while the other two drove across the street as usual, and stopped to wait ten or fifteen feet east of the gate through which Krapotkin was to make his dash. At that time, the gate was closed; but the teamsters had been drawing wood all day, and just before five o'clock the sentinels signaled that half a dozen carts had just started for the prison with loads. Two or three minutes later a bareheaded peasant, in red shirt, black velveteen trousers, and dusty top-boots, strolled along the street in front of the military hospital, seated himself on the curb of the sidewalk opposite the lane, and began to eat ripe cherries out of his hat, which he held between his knees. The sentry at the door of the military hospital could not be seen from the windows of the conspirators' bungalow, on account of an intervening corner of the prison; and this peasant was a disguised conspirator whose duty it was to watch the attempt to disarm the sentry and to signal to the house whether it succeeded or not. His signals could be seen through the lane, and in order that they should not attract attention, they were to be made by spitting out the



cherry stones, or throwing them away to the right or left, in accordance with a prearranged code.

Two minutes after this peasant took his seat on the curb, a smooth-faced young man, in worn but respectable clothing, who looked as though he might be a poorly paid department clerk, approached the policeman, who was standing listlessly at the intersection of the southern street and the lane, and began to make inquiries about rooms to rent in that neighborhood.

"What kind of room do you want?" asked the policeman.

The conspirator described in a general way the room that he knew was available.

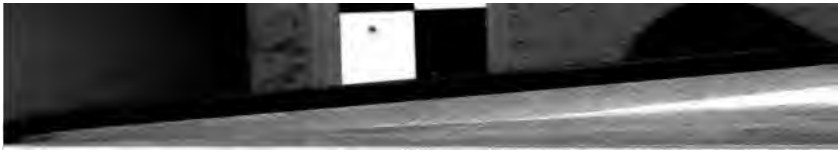
"I have a room of that kind myself," said the policeman, "and it is n't at all dear. Perhaps it 's the very thing you 're looking for."

After some talk about terms, the conspirator asked to see it.

"I can't show it to you now," said the policeman, "but I shall be off duty at six o'clock, and if you 'll meet me here then, I 'll take you to the house."

The conspirator, however, could not be there at six o'clock, and wanted to see the room at once. "Is it far?" he inquired.

"No," said the policeman; "it 's quite near."

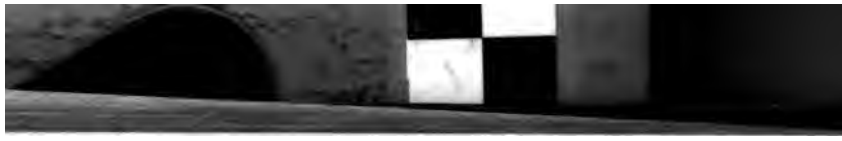


"Well, then, let 's go. It won't take you long, and there 's nothing doing here."

The policeman was anxious to rent his room; there was not one chance in twenty that a short absence from his beat would be noticed in that sleepy neighborhood; and after assuring himself by a glance around that there was not a soul in sight except the peasant sitting on the curb at the other end of the lane and eating cherries out of his hat, he consented to go.

The conspirator and the policeman had hardly left the street south of the prison when a train of six carts entered the lane, turned the corner into the hospital street, passed through the gate, and proceeded to the eastern end of the prison yard, where the wood was being piled against the stockade. As they expected to return soon, they left the gate open.

Two minutes later, a slightly intoxicated peasant made his appearance in front of the military hospital, and stopped to "pass the time of day" with the sentry at the door. Soldiers on duty are not supposed to talk with casual passers-by; but this particular soldier was himself a peasant; he had found it tiresome and monotonous to stand all day before a sentry-box in a hot sun, and he was glad of an opportunity to talk with a



man of his own class who was just drunk enough to be amusing. The conversation drifted from one thing to another until the disguised conspirator began to describe to the peasant soldier some of the wonderful things that he had recently seen at a public exhibition given for the entertainment and enlightenment of the common people. Among them was a marvelous instrument which, when one looked through it, made a louse appear as big as a dog.

"Cross yourself!" exclaimed the soldier, incredulously. "Nothing could make a louse appear as big as a dog. You were probably drunk."

The conspirator, however, insisted, with earnest if somewhat incoherent eloquence, that such was the effect produced by the instrument which he saw. "And what 's more," he added, "if you don't believe in God's miracles, I can show you one of those things right here. It 's a small, cheap one,—I had to go without a pair of new boots to buy it,—and of course it won't make a louse into a dog; but it 'll make one look as big as a cat, and I can prove it to you. Drunk, am I? I have n't had but two drinks to-day. And, anyhow, the instrument is n't drunk. Look at this!" The speaker produced triumphantly a small,



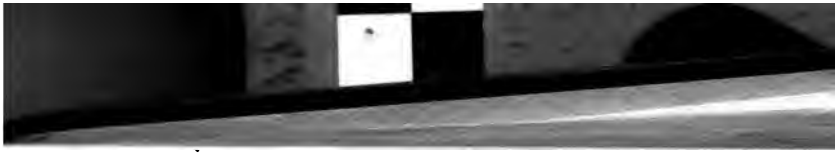
cheap microscope. The peasant soldier was interested. He did not believe for a moment that a trumpery little brass contrivance like that could possibly change the size of an insect or an animal; but he did want to see what a louse would look like through it, and when the peasant proposed that a search be made in his hair for the necessary specimen, the soldier set his rifle against the sentry-box and began the entomological quest, the peasant, to facilitate operations, getting down on his knees.

The peasant who was sitting on the curb two hundred yards away eating cherries out of his hat took two cherry-pits from his mouth, one after the other, and threw them carelessly to the right. It was the final signal: "All safe outside, the sentry is disarmed."

There was absolutely nothing in the whole environment to suggest a crisis, and yet the supreme moment had come, and thirteen hearts were beating fast with anxiety and excitement.

A moment later the motionless summer air was gently stirred by the music of a violin. An unseen performer in the bungalow was playing softly Schubert's "Serenade." Krapotkin heard it, and loosening his arms in the sleeves of his long, green-flannel dressing-gown, walked slowly

along the path toward the end that was nearest to the gate, watching with fierce impatience for a favorable opportunity to run. As the sentries paced back and forth on their beat, they happened to come together near the end of the path that was farthest from the gate while Krapotkin was at the near end. The hidden violinist noticed the lucky chance and, suddenly changing time and melody, swept into one of Kontsky's rapid riotous mazurkas, as though to say: "Run! Run! It's now or never!" Krapotkin started at top-speed for the gate, throwing off his dressing-gown as he ran. Both sentries pursued him, and one of them got so near that he could have shot him in the back without a chance of missing; but as he had no orders to kill, and still hoped to take the fugitive alive, he did not fire. Krapotkin burst through the gate, with the sentry at his heels, and cast himself headlong into the droshky, where stood Dr. Veimar with a cocked revolver in his hand. The black mare, trained specially for this emergency, started instantly at full speed, and turned so suddenly and rapidly into the lane that both passengers were nearly pitched out. In the lane Dr. Veimar threw around Krapotkin one of the light black cloaks often worn by gentlemen to protect their frock coats from



dust, and opened and put on his head an opera-hat. He then made a similar change in his own dress, so that when they turned into the next street south, they looked like two gentlemen going to or returning from an afternoon reception.

They drove first to the house of Krapotkin's sister-in-law, where the fugitive's clothing was changed, and then to a remote barber shop on one of the islands in the Neva, where his huge, flowing beard was removed. At the suggestion of Dr. Veimar, they then went to Donon's restaurant in the city, and there in a private room they took their dinner and spent the evening. The house of Krapotkin's sister-in-law, where he first stopped, was searched by the police almost immediately after he left it, and searches were made that evening in all the other houses where it was thought possible that he might be; but the shrewdest detective never imagined that he could be dining almost openly in one of the most fashionable places of public resort in St. Petersburg.

All the conspirators in the plot vanished in the confusion and excitement that followed the escape. The lady left the military hospital by a rear door opening on another street; the watchers in the bungalow abandoned their newly leased premises, and were seen no more; and as for the

poor department clerk who wished to rent a room, the red-shirted peasant with the hatful of cherries, and the half-intoxicated peasant with the cheap microscope, nobody ever suspected that they were conspirators or that their relation to the affair was anything more than accidental.

Dr. Veimar was afterward sent to the mines of Kara for alleged complicity in the assassination of General Mezentsef; and one of the watchers in the bungalow, who gave this story to me and drew the accompanying plan, was exiled by administrative process to eastern Siberia for "political untrustworthiness"; but, as far as I know, their connection with this plot was never suspected. Dr. Viemar died at the mines, and for that reason I have felt at liberty to mention his name.

A few days after his escape, Krapotkin, equipped with the passport of a friend, crossed Finland by an unfrequented route, took a Swedish steamer at a remote port on the Gulf of Bothnia, and made his way, by Christiania and Hull, to Edinburgh. He is now living near London with his wife, and as all his Russian property has been confiscated by the government, he is compelled to support himself by literary work. He has been a frequent contributor to *Nature;*



his name appears often in the proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society; he is the author of important articles in the Encyclopædia Britannica, Chambers' Encyclopædia, and the "Statesman's Year-Book"; and his articles on scientific subjects were for many years a feature of the *Nineteenth Century* review. His sister Hélène and his sister-in-law the Princess Krapotkin were both arrested and thrown into prison in St. Petersburg after his escape, and his brother Alexander was banished to Siberia, where, after many years of suffering, he committed suicide. Krapotkin himself never has returned to Russia, and probably never will return, since there is at present nothing to indicate that the empire of the Czar will be in the near future a safe place of residence for a thinking man.





"A HEART FOR EVERY FATE"





VI

"A HEART FOR EVERY FATE"

NOW and then, the orbit of almost every human life is crossed by a character whose fortitude in suffering and indomitable courage in adversity put to shame the weakness of the faint-hearted, raise the standards of the dauntless, and compel even the cynic and the pessimist to admit that man, at his best, is bigger perhaps than anything that can happen to him. Such a character came into my life when I made the acquaintance of the exiled Russian poet Felix Vadimovitch Volkhovsky. I met him first in the west-Siberian city of Tomsk.[1] He was then thirty-eight years of age and was a man of cultivated mind, warm heart, and high aspirations. He knew English well, was familiar with American history and literature, and had translated

[1] This meeting was described in the *Century Magazine* many years ago; but Volkhovsky, at that time, was still in exile, and the adventures that I purpose to relate were still in the future.—G. K.

into Russian many of the poems of Longfellow. He spoke to me with great admiration, I remember, of Longfellow's "Arsenal at Springfield," and recited it to me aloud. He was one of the most winning and lovable men that it has ever been my good fortune to know; but his life had been full of tragedy and suffering. His health had been shattered by long imprisonment in the fortress of Petropavlovsk; his hair was prematurely gray; and when his face was in repose there seemed to be an expression of profound melancholy in his dark-brown eyes. I became intimately acquainted with him, and very warmly attached to him; and when I bade him good-by, on my return from the mines of Kara, he put his arms around me and kissed me and said: "George Ivanovitch, please don't forget us! In bidding you good-by, I feel as if something were going out of my life that would never again come into it."

Volkhovsky's story, as it was told to me by his comrades, was a sad but inspiring narrative of brave and generous endeavor, thwarted and frustrated by despotic repression. He was born in 1847, in the south of Russia, where his parents had an estate; and he spent all the earlier years of his life at home. The sympathy with the Rus-



sian peasants and the desire to improve their condition that were so characteristic of his manhood found expression in his attitude toward them, even as a child. When he was only seven years of age, he happened to see a serf flogged on his father's estate; and this first experience of what seemed to him shocking cruelty and injustice so aroused and excited him that he rushed into the house, with tear-filled eyes, doubled up his little fists, and attacked furiously his cold and austere grandfather—the first man of the family that he chanced to come across. For this outburst of indignation and disrespect he was promptly punished; but the incident made a deep impression upon his childish mind, and first led him to think about the social and political conditions that authorized and empowered one man to have another man mercilessly flogged with a whip. As the twig is bent the tree is inclined; and the direction given to the boy's thoughts by the flogging of a serf determined, in large part, his future career, and made him, eventually, a reformer, a member of the party of "The People's Will," and a revolutionist.

In 1865 or 1866, he entered the Moscow University, and two or three years later joined Herman Lopatin, a fellow-student, in an attempt to raise

money for the purpose of sending teachers and books to the peasants in the agricultural villages.[2] In this work there was nothing illegal, because the serfs had just been emancipated, and the government professed an intention to have them educated. The administration, however, and especially the police, regarded with suspicion every attempt to enlighten the common people that had not been officially authorized and sanc-

[2] Lopatin afterward became one of the most daring and resourceful of the Russian revolutionists. He was often imprisoned and exiled; made half a dozen remarkable escapes; set free the exiled Russian author Lavrof; attempted, in the disguise of a gendarme officer, to liberate the exiled political economist Chernyshevski; became a member of the executive committee of the revolutionary party; and was finally arrested, for the sixth or seventh time, tried for high treason, found guilty, and condemned to death. His sentence was subsequently commuted to imprisonment for life, and shortly after my return from my second Siberian expedition he was incarcerated in the fortress of Schlusselburg, where he spent eighteen years. In November, 1905, just after the promulgation of the Freedom Manifesto, he was released; but he was then a broken-down invalid, sixty years of age. In the intervals between his terms of imprisonment and exile, he translated into Russian Herbert Spencer's "Psychology," "Sociology," and "Ethics"; the first volume of Taine's "Origines de la France Contemporaine"; Grant Allen's "Evolutionist at Large," and a number of other well known French and English books of a scientific or historical nature. Turgenief knew him well, and is said to have had him in mind when he created the character of Nezhdanof, in "Virgin Soil."—G. K.



tioned; and in 1868, at the age of twenty-one, Volkhovsky was arrested upon the charge of exciting discontent among the peasants by furnishing them with literature of a "pernicious tendency." He was imprisoned at first at Moscow; but two or three weeks later he was taken to St. Petersburg and thrown into the fortress of Petropavlovsk. In one of the dark and sepulchral casemates of that great political prison he spent eight months. He was then tried by a special commission, was found to be innocent, and was acquitted. Returning to the south of Russia, he settled in Odessa, and was shortly afterward married to Miss Antonova of that city, a young woman of character and education, who sympathized with his views and aims, and who herself belonged to the class described by the Government as "politically untrustworthy." The domestic happiness of the young couple, however, was of short duration. Volkhovsky himself continued to correspond with his friend and comrade Lopatin; the latter, who had been exiled to the Caucasus, happened to exchange a few letters with a revolutionary conspirator named Nechaief; and in 1869, when Nechaief organized the society known as "Obshchestvo Narodnoi Raspravy" [Retributive Justice of the People] Volk-



hovsky and Lopatin were both arrested, merely because intercepted letters showed that one of the three had been in correspondence with the other two. Lopatin succeeded in escaping from his guards, and Nechaief, the real conspirator, fled to western Europe; but Volkhovsky, merely because he had been in correspondence with a man who had exchanged letters with Nechaief, was taken to St. Petersburg and again thrown into the fortress of Petropavlovsk.[3]

Solitary confinement in a fortress is not regarded by the Russian Government as the severest of its non-capital punishments; but all political offenders who have experienced it agree that when it is prolonged beyond a year or two it is far more injurious to mind and body than the hard labor of penal servitude. I have explored to their lowest depths the mines of the trans-Baikal, and I know, as well as a mere observer can know, the hard conditions of life in them; but if I were a political offender, I should much

[3] The facts, as subsequently established by judicial investigation, showed that although Lopatin had exchanged letters with Nechaief, he did not approve the latter's methods, nor take any part in his conspiracy. Volkhovsky had never had any relations whatever with Nechaief. (Indictment in the "Trial of the 193" before the Governing Senate, p. 12. Article "Lopatin" in Russian encyclopedia of Brockhaus and Efron, supplementary vol. 2, p. 96.)

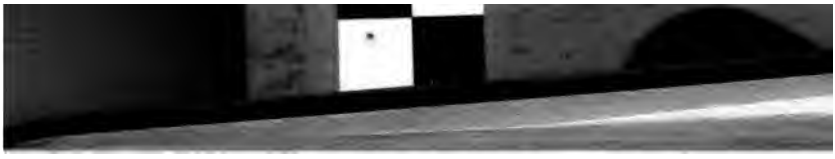


rather work for three years in a Nerchinsk silver mine than spend three years in one of the crypt-like casemates of the Petropavlovski fortress. A hard-labor convict in the mines has occupation; sees the outside world at least twice a day; and associates with companions in misery who are at least human beings; but a prisoner in one of the casemates of the Trubetskoi bastion has nothing to do but pace his cell; sees nothing but the damp walls that enclose him; and meets no one but the silent guards who bring him his food, or watch him furtively through the narrow "Judas" slit in the heavy door. The stillness is that of the grave. There is not a footstep, nor a voice, nor a sound of any kind to indicate the presence of another human being in the bastion. Every fifteen minutes the bells of the fortress cathedral chime out slowly the air with which the words "Have mercy, O Lord!" are associated in the Russian liturgy, and every hour they ring the melody of the ecclesiastical chant, "How glorious is our Lord in Zion!" The damp, heavy atmosphere, the dripping walls, the oppressive silence, and the faint muffled tones of the cathedral bells chiming mournful airs from the church liturgy, all seem to say to the lonely and dejected prisoner, "Although not dead, you are buried." Few



men are strong enough to bear, without serious impairment of bodily and mental vigor, such complete isolation from the world of the living, and such entire deprivation of the absolute necessities of intellectual life. Many prisoners have gone insane in those gloomy casemates, and many more have come out of them with shattered health and broken character. Volkhovsky, however, was a young and vigorous man, of dauntless courage and invincible fortitude, and he lived through two years and a half of isolation and loneliness without wholly losing hope or strength. His health failed, but he was sustained to the last by an indomitable spirit. In 1871 he was tried in the St. Petersburg Chamber of Justice, with Vladimir I. Kovalevski and eighty-five other prisoners, on the charge of conspiring with Nechaief to overthrow the existing form of government. Volkhovsky and Kovalevski were able to show that they had had no relations whatever with Nechaief, and both were set at liberty.[4]

[4] Indictment in the "Trial of the 193" before the Governing Senate, p. 12; Article "Nechaief" in the Russian encyclopedia of Brockhaus and Efron, supplementary volume 2, p. 274. As an illustration of the reckless and wholly unjustifiable way in which arrests on suspicion were made in this case I may mention the fact that Volkhovsky's fellow-



"A HEART FOR EVERY FATE"

Volkhovsky, at this time, was only twenty-four years of age. He had been twice tried for political crime and twice acquitted; but his blameless record had not saved him from three years of isolation in the gloom and solitude of a bomb-proof casemate. As soon as he was released, he joined his wife; returned with her to Odessa; engaged in business there, and established a home.

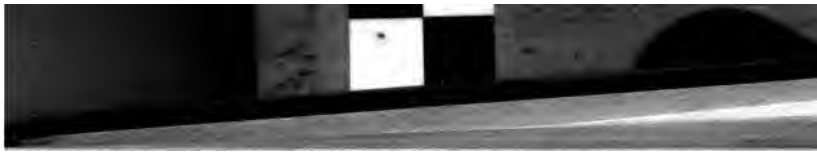
It was practically impossible for a young man of Volkhovsky's temperament and ideals to regard with indifference the great movement for the enlightenment and elevation of the peasants which began in Russia in 1871, and which first took definite and practical form in the impulsive, generous, but quixotic crusade known as "going to the people." Thousands of educated young men, fired with an ardent desire to do something to atone for the sins of their fathers toward the recently emancipated serfs, and filled with pity for the latter's ignorance and misery, went into the Russian villages, into the suburbs of the great cities, into factories, into workshops, into all places where the peasants toiled and suffered, and sought by sympathy, by coöperation, and by personal instruction, to help and elevate the men

prisoner, Kovalevski, afterwards became Associate Russian Minister of Finance.—G. K.



and women whom their fathers had bought, sold, and flogged. Hundreds of cultivated and refined young women, with that singular capacity for self-sacrifice which is inherent in the Russian character, abandoned their homes and families, put on coarse peasant dress, went into the remotest, loneliest, and dreariest villages of the empire, and, in the capacity of school-teachers, midwives, or nurses, shared the hard prosaic life of the common people, labored with them, suffered with them, and bore their burdens, merely in order to learn how they could best be helped. Something analogous to this took place in our own country soon after the close of the Civil War, when educated and refined young women from the New England States went south to teach in negro schools; but the movement in the United States never became epidemic, as it did in Russia, nor was it ever characterized by the reckless, heroic self-sacrifice which illumines so many dark pages of Russian history. Volkhovsky was soon drawn into this movement, and in 1873, he organized in Odessa a "circle" for the promotion of popular enlightenment, which was affiliated with the famous circle of Tchaykovsky in St. Petersburg.[5] These circles, of course, did not escape

[5] Referring to the latter, Prince Krapotkin says, "Never



the vigilant attention of the government. They were regarded as seditious in their character, and steps were at once taken to put a stop to what was believed to be nothing less than a secret revolutionary propaganda.

In 1874 Volkhovsky was arrested, for the third time, and taken to Moscow, where he was confined temporarily in one of the detention cells of the gendarmerie. Fearing that her husband would not survive another long term of fortress imprisonment, Mrs. Volkhovsky, with the aid of Vsovolod Lopatin—brother of Herman Lopatin —made a daring attempt to set him free while he was being taken through the streets from the gendarmerie to the Moscow central prison. A handful of snuff was thrown into the face of the gendarme officer who had him in charge, and availing himself promptly of his guard's temporary blindness, Volkhovsky attempted to spring into a droshky that his wife had in waiting. Just as he reached it, the vehicle started ahead at full speed, and the sudden jerk caused him to miss his footing. His wife seized his arm

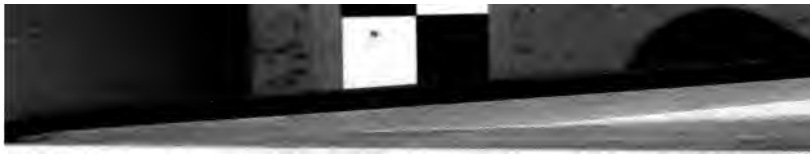
did I meet elsewhere such a collection of morally superior men and women as the score of persons whose acquaintance I made at the first meeting of the circle of Tchaykovsky. I still feel proud of having been received into that family." (Memoirs of a Revolutionist, p. 306.)



and tried to draw him into the sleigh, but she was not strong enough to hold him. As he fell, he grasped one of the uprights of the runner and clung desperately to that; but after being dragged seventy-five or a hundred feet through the snow he lost his hold, and two or three street policemen sprang upon him before he could recover himself. Lopatin attempted to rescue him, but both were eventually overpowered.[6] Volkhovsky and his wife never saw each other again. She broke down completely under the strain of disappointment, anxiety and grief; was forced to leave Russia in order to escape arrest; and eventually went to Italy, where she hoped that she might regain her health and strength. Life, however, had been too hard for her, and she died in Sicily, of a broken heart, just after her husband had been exiled to Siberia.

Volkhovsky and Lopatin were taken to St. Petersburg where they were thrown into the fortress of Petropavlovsk to await trial. Then began for Volkhovsky another long term of solitary confinement, which proved to be even more rigorous and severe than the preceding terms. His casemate cell was gloomy and damp, and as month after month and year after year passed,

[6] Indictment in the "Trial of the 193," p. 301.



he not only began to suffer from rheumatism and anæmia, but gradually became so deaf that he could no longer communicate with his fellow-prisoners by means of the knock-alphabet, and could hear no more the bells of the fortress cathedral chiming at the quarter hours, "Have mercy, O Lord!" and at midnight, "God Save the Czar."

The calamity that Volkhovsky feared most was impairment of his mental faculties—or complete loss of reason—from lack of occupation. A prisoner, in such circumstances, is likely to "lose his grip," and to sink into mind-destroying melancholia, as the result of brooding incessantly over his own misfortunes. Volkhovsky, as an intelligent and resolute man, determined to combat this tendency by every means in his power. He avoided, as far as possible, reflection and retrospection, and kept his mind active by forcing it into exercise upon subjects not connected with his life.

He went over all that he could remember of Russian history; arranged the facts in chronological order; and then put them into the best possible rhythmical form, so as to make a sort of national epic. In this way he composed a poetical history of Russia, in three or four hundred stanzas, and committed it to memory. He

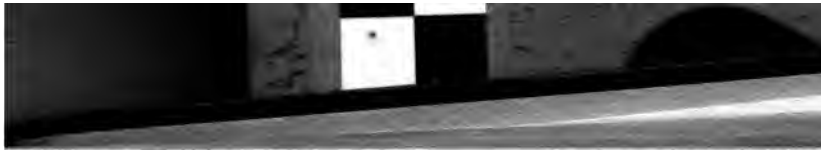


then thought out and memorized thousands of words of doggerel poetry upon all sorts of subjects suggested to him by his experience or his imagination. When I met him in Tomsk, he could still repeat hundreds of these verses, which had little or no value as poetry, but which were interesting on account of the circumstances that brought them into existence.

Volkhovsky's third term of imprisonment lasted three years. On the 30th of October, 1877, he was arraigned before a special session of the Governing Senate convened to try one hundred and ninety-three political offenders (including Volkhovsky) upon the charge of "organizing an illegal society for the purpose of bringing about in the near or remote future, the overthrow of the present form of government and a change in the existing methods of administration." [7]

At the very beginning of the proceedings, the prisoners asked that they be tried together and not in separate groups; that they be allowed to have their own stenographer; and that the case be heard, with open doors, in a room large enough to accommodate a fair representation of the public. The court ruled that these requests were inadmissible. Most of the accused thereupon

[7] Indictment in the "Trial of the 193," p. 299.



declined to plead, or to make any defense; and some of them protested so vehemently, and with so much intemperance of language, against the ruling of the presiding judge (Senator Peters) that they were forcibly removed from the court room. The fiery orator Muishkin, before he was seized and choked into silence by the guards, shouted passionately, "This court is worse than a house of ill fame. There women prostitute themselves from necessity; but here senators sell their honor, prostitute justice, and sacrifice the lives of others, for the sake of rank and reward." [8]

When Volkhovsky was called upon to plead, he arose in the dense throng of prisoners, and addressing the presiding judge respectfully, said: "Will not Your High Excellency allow me to come and stand directly in front of the bench? I am partially deaf, and I cannot hear, at this distance, the questions that may be put to me." As

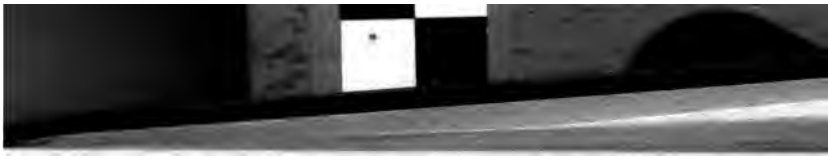
[8] Muishkin's speech is given in full in Bazilevski's "Political Crime in Russia," vol. 3, p. 296. He was condemned to penal servitude for life, and after five years of imprisonment, at first in Siberia and afterward in the fortress of Schlusselburg, he committed suicide, in 1882, by striking the prison surgeon, in order that he might be shot. He had nothing against the man whom he attacked; but he sought death, and the surgeon was the only official of rank to whom he could get access. (Article "Muishkin" in the Russian encyclopedia of Brockhaus and Efron, supplementary vol. 2, p. 226.)—G. K.



Volkhovsky was almost the first of the accused to address the court with the forms of courtesy, the presiding judge treated him with exceptional consideration and immediately granted his request. When asked for his name and plea, Volkhovsky said:

"Your High Excellency and Senators: My name is Felix Vadimovitch Volkhovsky. I am only thirty years of age. I have spent six years in solitary confinement in a casemate of the fortress. My health is shattered; my hair is turning gray; I am partially deaf; I have almost forgotten how to talk; and my wife is dying alone in Sicily."

Here Volkhovsky's feeble voice broke a little, and he seemed to totter on his feet, as if he were about to fall. The presiding judge ordered that a chair and a glass of water be brought to him. Volkhovsky drank a little of the water, but declined to take the seat. After a moment he recovered himself and in a stronger voice and with bolder demeanor said: "Notwithstanding all these circumstances, which are, perhaps, of a purely personal nature, I should play a cowardly part, and should be false to my convictions and unfaithful to the people whom I have tried to help, if I did not join my comrades in protesting

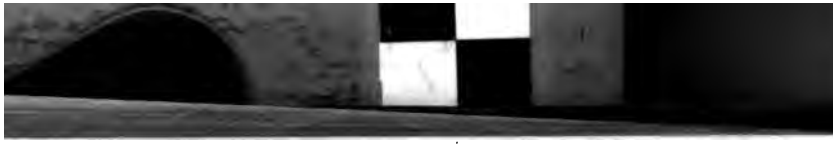


against a ruling which denies us a public trial; segregates us in groups, prevents us from hearing one another's statements; and deprives us of the most important of our legal rights. I refuse to take any part in such a trial, and I decline to plead. I will not give expression to my feeling for this court, but it is anything you like except respect." [9]

At this point, Volkhovsky was stopped by the presiding judge and was ordered to take his seat. Not wishing to be subjected to personal violence he obeyed.

It is not necessary, so far as the story of Volkhovsky's life is concerned, to give an extended account of the "trial of the 193." It lasted from the 30th of October, 1877, to the 4th of February, 1878, and ended in the acquittal of ninety of the prisoners and the condemnation of one hundred and three. Of the latter, four were sentenced to penal servitude for life; twenty-five to incarceration in fortresses, with or without hard labor; and seventy-four to confinement in prisons of the ordinary type, or to exile in Siberia

[9] Volkhovsky's speech is summarized in Bazilevski's "Political Crime in Russia" (Paris, 1895), vol. 3, "The Trial of the 193," pp. 274-276. The more personal part, here given, is from the recollection of one of his comrades.—G. K.



for terms ranging from eighteen months to life.[10]

About the time that Volkhovsky's wife died in Sicily, he himself was sentenced to "domestication" [na zheetyo] in the west Siberian province of Tobolsk. The place of residence assigned him was Tiukalinsk, a small provincial town of four or five hundred log houses, which, at that time, had a population of perhaps three thousand. There he lived, under police surveillance, for five years; supporting himself by house-painting, sign-painting, book-binding, and other handicrafts, which he was compelled to learn. In Tiukalinsk, his aged mother, who had gone with

[10] Among the accused found guilty were two who have since visited the United States. Egor Lazaref made his escape, and lived for a time in Denver, Colorado; and Madame Breshkovskaya, who is now in prison in Irkutsk, spent several months in New York and Boston in 1904 or 1905, and made there many warm friends.

Although Alexander II was generally regarded, in western Europe and America, as a just and humane man, he not only disapproved the court's merciful recommendations, in the cases of many of the condemned, but, at the suggestion of General Mezentsef, exiled to Siberia by administrative process eighty of the prisoners whom the court had acquitted. It is perhaps a significant fact that the chief of gendarmes who made this suggestion, and the Czar who acted upon it, were both assassinated within the next three years. ("Political Crime in Russia," by B. Bazilevski, Paris, 1885; vol. 3, p. 331.)—G. K.



him into exile, died, and there, two or three years later, he married again. His second wife, Alexandra Sergeevna Volkhovskaya, whom I remember as a pale, delicate, sad-faced woman, twenty-five or thirty years of age, had also been exiled for political reasons, and was living in Siberia alone.

In 1883, Volkhovsky was transferred to the city of Tomsk, where he found congenial employment in the editorial office of the *Siberian Gazette.* When I bade him good-by there, in the spring of 1886, he and his wife had three children and seemed comparatively happy; but Fate never spared Volkhovsky long. A little more than a year after my return to the United States, he wrote me a profoundly sad and touching letter, in which he informed me of the death of his wife by suicide. He himself had been thrown out of employment by the suspension of the liberal Tomsk newspaper, the *Siberian Gazette;* and his wife had tried to help him support their family of young children by giving private lessons and by taking in sewing. Anxiety and overwork had finally broken down her health; she had become an invalid, and in a morbid state of mind, brought on by unhappiness and disease, she reasoned herself into the belief that she was an incumbrance,

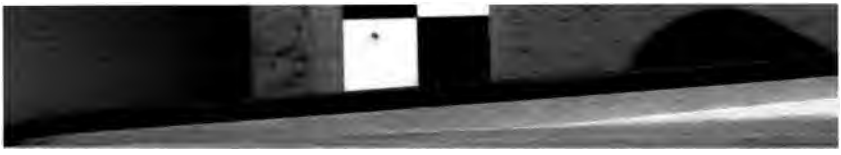


rather than a help, to her husband and her children, and that they would ultimately be better off if she were dead. On the 7th of December, 1887, she put an end to her unhappy life by shooting herself through the head with a pistol. Her husband was devotedly attached to her, and her death, under such circumstances and in such a way, was a terrible blow to him. In his letter to me he referred to a copy of James Russell Lowell's poems that I had caused to be sent to him, and said that in reading "After the Burial," he vividly realized, for the first time, that the lines, although written by a bereaved American, expressed the deepest thoughts and feelings of a bereaved Russian.

By means of secret prearranged addresses in Russia and in the United States, I succeeded in maintaining a desultory and precarious correspondence with Volkhovsky until 1889. In the spring of that year I received from him two short letters filled with tidings of misfortune, and then—nothing more. The two letters were, in part, as follows:

"TOMSK, February 14, 1889.

"I write you a few lines to tell you how weary I am of waiting for a letter from you! You have



probably heard before this time of the final suppression of the *Siberian Gazette.* It is hard and it is shameful! You need not hesitate any longer to write whatever you like about it for publication. You will not injure the paper because there is no hope of its resurrection.

"My youngest daughter is still sick and has grown so thin that it is painful to look at her. She sleeps badly and often I have to be up all night taking care of her. This, together with constant fear for her life, disorders my nerves terribly, and undermines what health I have left. I am greatly disheartened, too, by loneliness, notwithstanding my children and my friends. The affectionate tenderness of a beloved wife is a thing that some natures find it difficult to do without, no matter what else they may have. It is very hard, sometimes, my dear fellow, to live in this world!

"Since it became apparent that I should no longer be able to support myself by newspaper work (on account of the suppression of the *Siberian Gazette*) I have been looking for some other occupation or place; but, unfortunately, the present governor is expelling political exiles from all public positions, and even debarring them, to some extent, from private employment,



by showing such hostility to them that private individuals dare not give them work for fear of getting into trouble. I do not know how it will all end. I have sent four manuscripts to St. Petersburg, but none of them has been published. With most cordial remembrances to your wife, I am

"Yours,

"FELIX."

"IRKUTSK, Eastern Siberia, May 7, 1889.

"How long it is since I last received a letter from you, and how much I have needed your letters! They bring to me all the mental refreshment and all the gladness that life has for me, and at times I am sorely in need of them. Fate has dealt me another blow. My youngest daughter Katie died a month or two since of pneumonia. She had an attack of bronchitis winter before last which developed into chronic inflammation of the lungs; but in the spring of 1888 I took her into the country, where she grew better and began to run about and play. Unfortunately, however, she was exposed there to whooping cough, took the infection, and it ended in acute pneumonia and death. She was about three years old, and such a dear, lovable child!



But whose child is not dear and lovable? At any rate—

"No, I can't write any more about it. This is the second time within a few days that I have tried to write you of her—but I cannot—it hurts too much! As long as I am busy and can talk or write of other things, it seems as if the wound were healed; but let my thoughts once go to her, and I feel such grief and pain that I don't know what to do with myself.

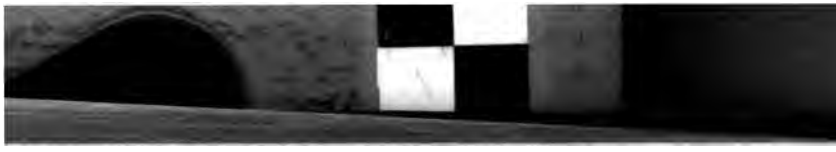
"I must explain to you how I happen to be in Irkutsk. It is a very simple story. Thanks to the recommendation of some of my Irkutsk friends I was offered here a place that was suited to my tastes and abilities, and I hastened to migrate.[11]

"My warmest regards to your wife! Write me!

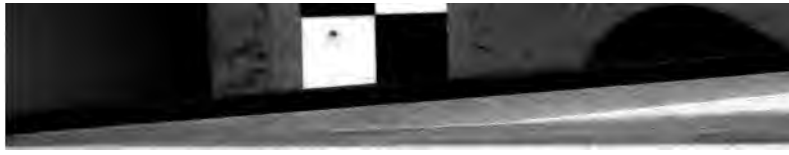
"Affectionately,

"FELIX."

[11] When political offenders sentenced merely to "domestication" have been ten years in exile, and have behaved during that time in a manner satisfactory to the authorities, it is customary to give them more freedom of movement. They are still kept under police surveillance, but are allowed to go anywhere within the limits of certain provinces. After sixteen years of imprisonment and exile, Volkhovsky received a "ticket of leave," which is colloquially known in the exile world as "a wolf's passport."—G. K.

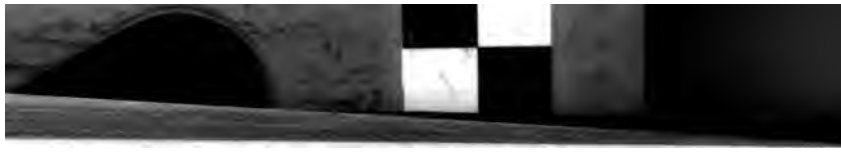


After the receipt of the above letter, I wrote Volkhovsky twice, but I heard from him no more, and did not know, until long afterward, what happened to him. When his last letter was written, he was living with his little daughter Vera in Irkutsk, and was trying, by means of hard work, to lighten the sense of loneliness and bereavement that he had felt since the death of his wife, his daughter Katie, and his baby boy. Hardly had life begun to seem once more bearable, when there came upon him a new misfortune in the shape of an order from the governor general directing the private bank where he was employed to dismiss him. He had committed no new offense, and there was no reason, so far as he was aware, for this arbitrary and imperative order; but General Ignatief seemed to be of opinion that the employment of a political exile in a bank was "prejudicial to public order," and Volkhovsky had to move on. The bank made him a present of two hundred dollars, as an evidence of their sympathy and regard, and leaving his little daughter Vera with friends in Irkutsk, he proceeded to Troitskosavsk, a small town on the frontier of Mongolia, where one of his fellow-prisoners in the trial of the 193 had for some time been living. The police there, however, had been



apprised of his dismissal from the Irkutsk bank by order of the governor general, and assuming of course that he must be a dangerous or troublesome man, they made life so uncomfortable for him that he finally resolved to abandon, temporarily, his daughter Vera, whom he had left in Irkutsk, and make his escape, if possible, to the United States by way of the Pacific Ocean. He had the money given to him by the bank, and a little more derived from the sale of a small volume of poems that he had published before leaving Tomsk [12] and if his small capital should be exhausted before he reached his destination, he determined to work as a stevedore, or a common laborer of some sort, until he should earn enough to go on. His objective point was the city of Washington, where he expected to find me. The nearest seaport on the Pacific where he could hope to get on board a foreign steamer was Vladivostok, about twenty-six hundred miles away. The distance to be traversed, under the eyes of a suspicious and hostile police, was immense; but Volkhovsky was cautious, prudent, and experienced, and assuming the dress ordinarily worn by retired army officers, he set out,

[12] "Siberian Echoes," by Ivan Brut [a pen name], Mikhailof & Makushin, Tomsk.



with "free horses" for the head waters of the Amur River, where he expected to get a steamer.

I cannot go into the details of his difficult and perilous journey from Troitskosavsk to Stretinsk, from Stretinsk down the Amur by steamer to Khabarofka, and from Khabarofka up the Ussuri and across Lake Khanka to Vladivostok. It was a journey full of adventures and narrow escapes, and nothing but the coolness, courage, and good fortune of the fugitive carried him through in safety. For the first time in this story of Volkhovsky's life, I have used above the words "good fortune." It came to him at last. The French have a proverb which declares "Qui ne se lasse pas lasse l' adversite." [He who does not tire tires adversity.] In more than seventeen years of imprisonment and exile, Volkhovsky never lost his grip, or acknowledged himself beaten, and Fate at last relented. From the moment when he resolved to escape, everything that happened to him proved to be advantageous.

There were four foreign steamers in the port of Vladivostok when he arrived there, and one of them, a coal steamer, was flying the flag of Great Britain. Volkhovsky went on board, ascertained that the steamer was bound for Japan, and asked the captain if he would take a passenger who had

neither passport nor official permission to leave the empire. The captain hesitated at first, but when Volkhovsky related his story, said that he was able and willing to pay for his passage, and exhibited my photograph and letters as proofs of his trustworthiness, the captain consented to take him. A hiding-place was soon found for him, and when the Russian officials came on board to clear the vessel, he was nowhere to be seen. A few hours later the steamer was at sea, and the escaping political exile, as he stood on the upper deck and watched the slow fading of the Siberian coast in the west, drew a long deep breath of relief, and turned his face, with reviving hope, toward the land where a personal opinion concerning human affairs is not regarded as "prejudicial to public order," and where a man who tries to make the world better and happier is not punished for it with six years of solitary confinement, eleven years of exile, and the loss of more than half his family.

The destination of the coal steamer was Nagasaki; and when Volkhovsky arrived there, he happened, by the sheerest accident, to get into a hotel kept by a Russian. The proprietor, from the very first, seemed to regard him with suspicion, and asked him so many searching per-

l questions that Volkhovsky became alarmed. an, at that time, surrendered escaping exiles n Siberia, and there was a Russian man-of- in the harbor. In this emergency, expecting y hour to be arrested by the Japanese police, fugitive went for advice and aid to the Amer- consulate. The consul listened to his story; ed him over critically; read two or three of letters; and then said: "It is not the duty of American consul to assist political exiles in ping from Siberia; but your case appeals to and I will do what I can for you. If you are sted, say that you are an American citizen send for me."

But," objected Volkhovsky, "how can I say I am an American citizen when I speak



licly in the company of the fugitive, the consul allayed the suspicions of the hotel proprietor and the Russian naval officers, and two or three days later Volkhovsky left Nagasaki for Yokohama.[13]

After having paid his steamer fare from Vladivostok to Nagasaki, and from Nagasaki to Yokohama, Volkhovsky found himself in the latter place with hardly money enough to get across the Pacific and not half enough to reach Washington. He made inquiries concerning vessels about to sail for the western coast of America, and found that the English steamer *Batavia* was on the point of clearing for Vancouver, British Columbia. Going at once on board, he asked the purser what the fare to Vancouver would be in the steerage. The officer looked at him for a moment, saw that, although a foreigner, he was unmistakably a gentleman, and then replied, bluntly but not unkindly: "My dear sir, you can't go in the steerage—it's jammed full of Chinese emigrants. Nobody ever goes in the steerage except Chinamen; it's no place for you."

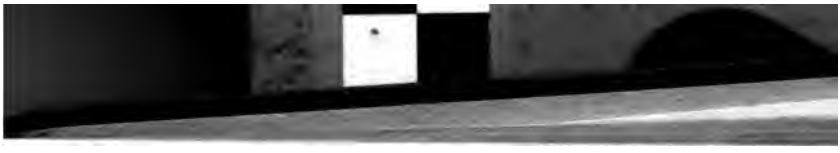
[13] It can do no harm now to say that the American consul in Nagasaki at that time was Mr. Birch, of Wheeling, West Virginia. I met him in the United States long afterward and he described to me the extremely favorable impression that Volkhovsky made upon him.—G. K.



"I must get to Vancouver," said Volkhovsky, "and I have very little money. The steerage will do. I have been in much worse places."

"All right!" replied the purser, "I 'll sell you a steerage ticket, but you can't live three weeks with Chinese emigrants. When we get to sea, I 'll find a place for you somewhere."

Until the *Batavia* had actually sailed and was out of the harbor, Volkhovsky did not dare to let the passengers, or even the officers of the steamer know who he really was and whence he had come. He believed that he had narrowly escaped detection and capture in Nagasaki, and he did not intend to run any more risks that could be avoided. At last, however, when the *Batavia* was far at sea, and the coast of Japan had sunk beneath the rim of the western horizon, he told his story to the officers of the ship, and admitted to the passengers with whom he became acquainted that he was an escaped political exile from Siberia. The interest and sympathy excited by his narrative deepened as the officers and passengers became better acquainted with him, and long before the *Batavia* reached Vancouver, he had so completely won the hearts of the whole ship's company that they took up a collection for the purpose of providing him with transportation



from Vancouver to the city of Washington. To this collection every soul on board contributed, from the captain down to the steward, the cook, and the boy who cleaned the ship's lamps.[14] When he left the steamer, he had money enough for a first class railway ticket to Washington and sixty Mexican silver dollars for incidental expenses. My first knowledge of Volkhovsky's escape came to me in a letter addressed in his familiar handwriting and post-marked "Vancouver." Wondering how an exile in eastern Siberia could possibly have mailed a letter—or had it mailed—in British Columbia, I tore open the envelope and read the first three lines. They were as follows:

"MY DEAR GEORGE IVANOVITCH: At last I am free! I am writing this letter to you not from that land of exile, Siberia, but from free America."

If I had suddenly received a letter post-marked "Zanzibar," from a friend whom I believed to be dead and buried in Alaska, I could hardly have

[14] The steward became so much attached to Volkhovsky, in the course of the voyage, that long afterward, in Montreal, he came to call upon me for the purpose of making inquiries about him.—G. K.

more astonished. Volkhovsky free and in
ish Columbia, within a few days' journey of
York! It seemed utterly incredible. At
time when this letter reached me, I was lec-
ng six nights a week in New York and New
land; but I telegraphed and wrote Volkhov-
that I would meet him at the Delevan House
lbany on the morning of Sunday, December
I spoke Saturday night in Utica, took the
t express for Albany, and reached the Del-
House about two o'clock. Volkhovsky had
yet arrived, and as it was uncertain when he
ld come I went to bed. Early in the morn-
a bell-boy knocked loudly at my door and
led me a slip of paper upon which, in Volk-



gard, and at times there was a peculiar anxious, hunted expression in his eyes which showed that he had recently been under great mental and emotional strain. Almost the first thing he said to me was: "George Ivanovitch, I am forty years of age. I have lost all my family except my little daughter Vera, whom I have left in eastern Siberia. I 'm afraid that the government, when it learns of my escape, will do something with her—perhaps put her in an asylum where I can never see her again. If I can only recover her, I may have strength, even at my age and in my broken health, to begin a new life in a new and strange country; but if I lose her, I may as well lie down and die."

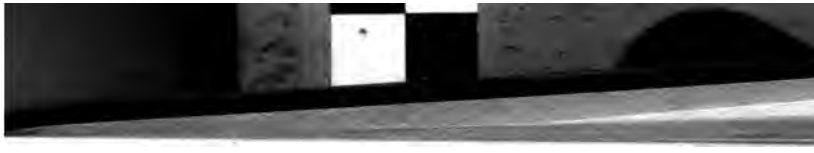
"We 'll get your daughter," I said, "if I have to go to Siberia myself, on a false passport, and kidnap her."

We knew a lady in St. Petersburg who could be trusted to manage the little girl's escape, but she was a political suspect and it might not be safe to send the necessary money to her directly. I therefore wrote to a friend in one of the foreign legations in the Russian capital, explained to him the circumstances of the case, and asked him: "Will you cash a bank draft for eight hundred rubles, if I send you one, and give the money, in



Russian notes, to a lady who will call at the legation and present my card. You are not to know who she is, and you are not to ask her any questions. If she presents my card, she is to have the cash." This letter I sent to the Foreign Office of the country that my friend's legation represented, with a request that it be forwarded. In due course of time, I received a reply in which the attache said that while it was not a part of his duty to facilitate the escape of exiles—young or old—from Siberia, he could not see that even the Russian Government would be injured by the return of a nine-year-old girl to her father, and that he would therefore receive and deliver the money as requested. "But my dear Mr. Kennan," he added, "did you suppose that by sending your letter to our Foreign Office you could prevent inspection of it by the Russian *cabinet noir?* Our official letters are often opened, although, so far as I can judge, this particular one has escaped."

The money reached its destination safely and was forwarded to Irkutsk. There Volkhovsky's friends cut off the little girl's hair; clothed her in the dress of a boy, and sent her, in care of a trustworthy attendant, to St. Petersburg. There was no trans-continental Siberian railway

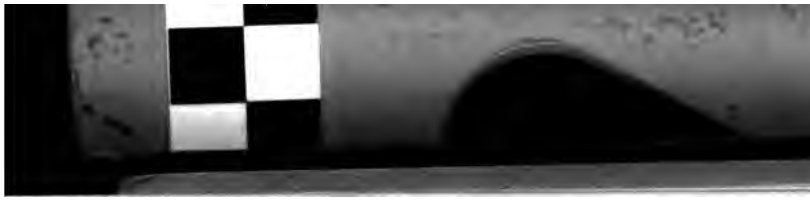


at that time, and Vera and her companion made the journey of nearly four thousand miles with relays of post horses. In St. Petersburg, her friends and the sympathetic attache committed her to the care of a German gentleman, who happened to be traveling in Russia with his family, and he and his wife undertook to get her across the frontier and take her to London. In the early part of 1890, Volkhovsky went to England to meet her, and in June I received a cable from him saying, "Hurrah! My child has arrived."

In a letter, written about a year later, to a friend in the United States, Hesba Stretton, the well known English novelist, referred to Volkhovsky and his daughter as follows:

"Volkhovsky, who escaped from Siberia rather more than a year ago, has been lecturing in England all winter. He has a charming little daughter ten years old who was born in exile. She has been staying for a fortnight with my married sister and her two daughters, and they are quite delighted with her; she is so original and affectionate, and she has had so much tragedy in her short life, which she speaks of now and then as if horrors were a natural part of existence to her. She was brought through Russia and Siberia disguised as a boy. We hope to wean her

ghts from these terrible subjects and give something of the ordinary joys of girlhood. her destiny must be a sad one, for she will y (and quite rightly) throw in her lot with evolutionists of Russia, and unless the revo- n comes soon, our little Vera will spend of her life in prison and in exile. She was ing Annie how the orthodox Russians hold thumb and two fingers pressed together to esent the Trinity during their worship, and she said: 'But God does n't mind how we our fingers, does he?' She was moaning in leep one night, and when Daisy woke her she 'I dreamed there were spies in the room, I pretended to be asleep until they went to , and then I got up and crept to the cot



daughter, and sustained by the influences of a favorable and friendly environment, he regained, in great measure, his health and strength. He became the editor of *Free Russia,* the paper established in London by the Friends of Russian Freedom; wrote articles for the *Contemporary, National,* and other English reviews; lectured on Russian subjects in all parts of Great Britain; and lived, generally, a happy and useful life. His daughter Vera grew up to young womanhood in England; was educated in Girton College; and when I saw her last, about three years ago, she was teaching in Dumferline, Scotland.

Upon the outbreak of the revolution in Russia, in 1905, Volkhovsky, then fifty-eight years of age, returned to the country where he had experienced so much sorrow and suffering, and again took up the fight for freedom by establishing and editing a liberal newspaper in Finland. The revolutionary movement, however, failed, and he was forced, much against his will, to return to England. "I would have stayed with my comrades," he afterward said to me, "and would have fought it through to the end, if I had been well enough; but I can no longer endure a term of fortress imprisonment, and my death in a casemate would not have helped my country."



"A HEART FOR EVERY FATE

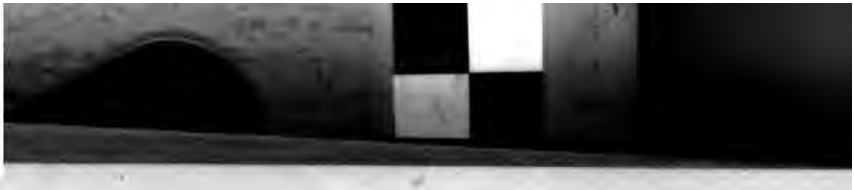
Volkhovsky has not lived, and probably will not live, to see Russia free; but his life has not been a failure. A greater poet than he, but not, perhaps, a braver man, said, before he perished at Missolonghi in the struggle for Greek independence:

"They never fail who fight in a great cause." [15]

[15] Byron, in "Marino Faliero."



"THE WORLD OF A SINGLE CELL"





VII

"THE WORLD OF A SINGLE CELL"

ONE hot sunny forenoon in July, as I sat in a front room of the Hotel d'Angleterre in St. Petersburg, reading the morning paper, Maxim, the uniformed messenger of the American legation, appeared at my door and said:

"His Excellency, the Minister, directs me to inform you that there is a package in the post-office for you, from Siberia, addressed in care of the legation. The police say that it must be opened and examined before it is delivered. Do you wish to be present at the examination, or would you prefer to have His Excellency send some one from the legation to represent you?"

I hardly knew what reply to make. Impulse prompted me to go to the postoffice myself, but Siberian experience had taught me caution, and, after a moment's reflection, I decided not to put myself in a position where I might be questioned



by the police with regard to a package of whose contents I was ignorant. Nearly all of my friends and acquaintances in Siberia were political exiles or convicts, and they might have sent me almost anything, from a collection of pressed flowers to a revolutionary manuscript.

"Tell His Excellency," I said to the messenger, "that if he can send some one from the legation to get the package I shall be greatly obliged."

An hour or two later, Maxim again appeared, bringing in his arms a good-sized roll, or bundle, which had been sewn up in coarse linen, sealed with red wax, and addressed to me, in English as well as in Russian, with a broad-pointed pen. The covering had been slit with a knife, and through the opening I could see a wad of cheap cotton cloth which had apparently been stuffed back into the package without much care after the examination.

"What is it?" I asked the messenger.

"God knows!" he replied piously. "It looks like one of my wife's old dresses."

Turning back the coarse linen wrapper, I took out a roll which seemed to be made up of strips of dirty, smoke-stained calico, twelve or fourteen inches in width. There were a dozen or more of these strips, and their aggregate length must



have been at least a hundred feet. The pattern of the cloth was Asiatic, and I remembered having seen material of the same kind used as a lining for Kirghis tents in the mountains of the Altai. But why should any one mail to me the torn-up and smoky lining of a Kirghis kibitka? Intrinsically, it was not worth the postage paid on it, and it did not seem to be the sort of thing that any of my Siberian friends would be likely to send me as a curiosity. Until I unrolled the last strip, I half expected to find something in the center; but there was nothing. Turning again to the wrapper, I examined the address; but it had been written in a careful copy-book hand, which was as legible as print, but which had no peculiarity that made it recognizable. The postmark was so blurred that I could not read it, and the seals bore the impress of a Turkish or Tatar coin. Neither inside nor outside the package was there anything to show where it had come from or who had sent it. Again I went over the strips, shook them out, and piled them one by one in a heap. Nothing in the shape of a clue appeared. The secret of the package—if it had a secret—was undiscoverable. But it *must* have a secret! No one that I knew in Siberia was likely to suppose that I would be inter-



ested in an old Kirghis tent lining. It must either contain something or mean something. Could there be writing on the cloth? Seating myself with crossed legs on the floor, I went over the strips, one by one and foot by foot, with microscopic closeness of examination. This time my search was rewarded. One of the last strips that I overhauled seemed to be a little thicker than the others, and upon feeling it carefully and holding it up to the light, I found that it was double, the edges of two strips having been lightly basted together with thread that corresponded exactly in color with the material. Between these strips, for a distance of ten or fifteen feet, had been placed large sheets of very soft and thin paper, closely covered with writing on both sides. The language of the manuscript was Russian; but inclosed in quotation marks, at the head of the first sheet, was the following line in English:

"The World of a Single Cell."

Although the document bore neither date nor signature, I guessed in a moment what its nature was and who had sent it to me, because I remembered very well when and where I had heard the play upon words contained in the title.



"THE WORLD OF A SINGLE CELL"

In the summer of the previous year, I had met in the mountains of the Altai a young Russian journalist named Eugene Voronin, who had been banished to that part of Siberia for connection with some political affair whose precise nature I did not learn. He was a young man—perhaps twenty-eight years of age—with blue eyes, fairly regular features of the Scandinavian type, a small mustache curling up a little at the ends, and closely cut, chestnut-brown hair which grew so thickly that when he ran his fingers through it, as he frequently did in animated conversation, it stood vigorously on end and seemed to give additional energy and alertness to his resolute, virile face. He impressed me as a man of unusual ability and character, and in describing to me his Siberian experience, he showed not only skill in narration, but discriminating intelligence in the selection of facts and incidents that were particularly instructive or telling. Our talk, in the single evening that I spent at his house, related chiefly to the conditions of political exile in the province of Semipalatinsk; but at a late hour of the night the conversation drifted to prisons, and he began to describe to me his life in one of the bomb-proof casemates of the Petropavlovski fortress. The few facts that he had time to



give me were so novel and interesting that when I bade him good-by I said: "Why can't you write all that out for me and send it to me? I am going away to-morrow, and this may be my last talk with you; but I shall get back to St. Petersburg next summer, and before that time you may think of some way of communicating with me safely, or may have a chance to send a letter by some one whom you can trust. The American legation will always know where I am. What I should like particularly is a description of your prison experience on its personal side. Tell me what you did from day to day, what impressions were made upon you, and what effect solitary confinement had upon your mind and character."

"The biggest thing of my life happened to me in the fortress," said Voronin, "but it is very personal; do you want that?"

"Certainly!" I replied. "Probably it is the very thing I *do* want. Don't be afraid to write about yourself. If a man ever has an excuse for egotism, it is when he is shut up alone in a bomb-proof casemate. He is then the only possible hero of his story, because he is the only inhabitant of his world."

"All right!" said Voronin, with a quick bright



smile, "I 'll call my recollections 'The Egotistic Story of an Altruist in a World of a Single Cell'; but don't count too much on it. The police are likely to take an interest in your Siberian correspondence, and they may confiscate it. However, I 'll get it through to you safely if I can. Good-by! Good luck!"

The young journalist and I never met again; but he did not forget his promise, and twelve months after I bade him good-by in the Siberian village of Ulbinsk, he not only sent me the story of his fortress experience, but concealed it so skilfully in an old Kirghis tent lining that it escaped the vigilance of the most experienced police in Europe, and very nearly escaped mine. The manuscript read as follows:

"The World of a Single Cell."

I. THE CHECKERBOARD SQUARE

When I last saw you, nearly a year ago, you asked me to write out for you the story of my life in the fortress of Petropavlovsk. Before this manuscript reaches you, you will probably have heard a dozen such stories, from men who are better qualified to describe prison life than I am; but all political offenders do not have the same



experience, even in the same environment, and it is possible that my life differed from that of other prisoners, even in so limited a world as that of a single cell. At any rate, you wanted me to tell you what I saw, what I did, and what happened to me, in the fortress, and it is an episode in my personal life that I shall try to give you. In thinking it over, it seems to me that I shall have to begin with the checkerboard square, because on that hangs all the story there is to tell.

When I was arrested, about two o'clock on a warm still night in June, I was taken by two gendarmes, in a closed carriage, to the Litovski Zamok, an old prison in St. Petersburg which, in the course of your investigations, you may have visited. After I had been searched, and after my name, age, occupation, and other biographical data had been recorded in the prison register, I was conducted to a fairly large but gloomy cell in the second story, where I was locked up and left to my own devices. Nothing of importance happened, so far as this story is concerned, until the next forenoon, when, as I stood at the grated window, looking out into the courtyard, my attention was attracted by a low tapping on the wall that separated me from the next



cell. I had heard, of course, of the knock alphabet, and knew that criminals in our prisons were accustomed to communicate with one another in this way; but I was wholly ignorant of the code, and did not even know on what principle it was based. All that I could do, therefore, was to rap three or four times on my side of the wall, in friendly response to my unseen neighbor's greeting. But this did not seem to satisfy him. After waiting a moment, as if in expectation of something further, he began another series of knocks, which lasted for two or three minutes, but which had no more significance for me than the tapping of a woodpecker. I was sorry that I had never taken the trouble to find out something about the knock alphabet, but as there seemed to be little use in exchanging signals that had no meaning on either side of the wall, I finally gave it up, went back to the window, and became absorbed again in my own gloomy thoughts. But the knocking continued at intervals throughout the forenoon, and every time I became conscious of my environment I heard the soft tap-tap-tapping of the unseen hand in the other cell. Just before the time for the midday meal it ceased; but after the turnkey had brought me my dinner and retired, it began again, and continued, hour

after hour, until I was finally forced into making an effort, at least, to understand it. The thing was getting on my nerves, and besides that, my neighbor might have something important to tell me.

As soon as I began to listen to the knocks attentively, I noticed that they were segregated in spaced groups, and the thought occurred to me that perhaps the number of knocks in a group was the serial number of a letter in the alphabet, one knock standing for "a," two for "b," three for "c," and so on. That would be the simplest possible form of knock alphabet, and the one that a prisoner would naturally think of first. As soon as I tested this conjecture, I found myself on the right track. I was not used to thinking by arithmetic, and had to go over the alphabet a dozen times before I could remember what the serial numbers of the letters were, but as my neighbor confined himself to a single word, and patiently repeated that word again and again, I finally figured it out. Numerically it was 21-14-4-5-18-19-20-1-14-4; alphabetically it proved to be u-n-d-e-r-s-t-a-n-d.[1]

All day long, the prisoner in the other cell had

[1] For the sake of clearness, I have substituted the English for the Russian alphabet.—G. K.

been knocking out, "Understand? Understand? Understand?" making more than a hundred knocks for every repetition of the word. He must have thought, before he got an intelligent response, that there was either great indifference or extraordinary stupidity on my side of the wall; but he probably knew that he was dealing with a novice and that he must have patience. As soon as I grasped the significance of the numerical inquiry, I responded eagerly "25-5-19" [Y-e-s]. He then knocked out slowly and carefully: "Learn better way; listen!" In the stillness of the prison, I could hear his actions, almost as perfectly as I could have seen them if the wall had been transparent. With some hard object in his hand, he gave the wall one emphatic rap, and then scratched a long horizontal line across it, as high up as he could reach. This was followed by two raps and the scratching of a second line, about a foot below the first. One after another, he drew in this way seven horizontal lines, six or eight feet long and twelve or fourteen inches apart, numbering them from one to seven, by means of raps, as he drew them. He then scratched six perpendicular lines across the first series, giving to each its number, from left to right, in the same way. The whole diagram,

when finished, presented itself to my imagination as a huge vertical checkerboard, with numbered rows and columns. I had never before had occasion to see with my ears, but I found it quite possible to do so, and I have no doubt that by making proper use of a scratcher and the knock alphabet, a mathematician might give a lesson in plane geometry through a ten-inch wall.

As soon as my instructor completed his invisible but audible checkerboard, he rapped out the words: "Put alphabet in squares." This I succeeded in doing by scratching the diagram on the floor with a rusty nail which I found sticking in the wood-work behind the door. The man in the other cell then began knocking again, but instead of designating a letter by its serial number in the alphabet, he located it on the checkerboard square by giving the number of the row and the number of the column at whose intersection it would be found. I don't know who originally invented this device, but it reduces by at least seventy per cent. the number of knocks required. To make the vowel "u" by the first method one must knock twenty-one times, but the same letter may be indicated on the checkerboard square with six knocks. In learning this code, the beginner must have the diagram before him, be-



cause he has to refer to it constantly; but after he has memorized the numerical values of the letters, he can dispense with it altogether, because he no longer needs its guidance. Every group of knocks then has its alphabetical equivalent in his brain, and the translation is made almost without conscious effort. After a few days' practice one can easily knock out from eight to twelve words a minute, and this rate of speed may be greatly increased by abbreviations in spelling.

The first question asked by my instructor, after I had learned the square, was "Who are you?"

I gave my name.

"From the gentry?"

"Yes."

"I thought so; all of our brothers" [i. e. all of our kind] "know the square. Rapping to you was like offering nuts to a toothless squirrel. I thought you'd never twig. What are you in for?"

"Probably for something I've written. I'm a political."

"Ah! I know your kind. They're not a bad sort, but they all write too much. There were two politicals in my party when I went to Si-



beria, and one of them was a writer. In our motherland writing is risky business. Your tongue will take you to Kiev, but your pen will take you to Schlusselburg." [2]

"Who are you?" I inquired in turn.

"Ivan Bezrodni" [Ivan Nameless], he replied.[3]

"A *brodyag,* then?" [A tramp.]

"Precisely that! The forest is my mother and the jail my father."

"Have you been in prison long?"

"Not long here, but many times in other places; I'm a runaway convict. Is this your first imprisonment?"

"The very first," I replied.

"Then I can teach you many useful things. I'm only a muzhik—educated with copper money—but I know jails as the tongue knows the mouth."

My fellow prisoner did not overestimate his capabilities as an instructor. In the course of

[2] Kiev is a place of old and holy churches to which thousands of pilgrims go; Schlusselburg is a fortress near St. Petersburg to which political offenders are sent.—G. K.

[3] Common criminals who escape from prison or exile and become tramps usually call themselves "Ivan Nameless," or "Ivan Dontremember," when they are rearrested, hoping thus to conceal their identities and their records. Hundreds of these "Ivans" are registered in the books of the police every year. They are known as "brodyags."—G. K.

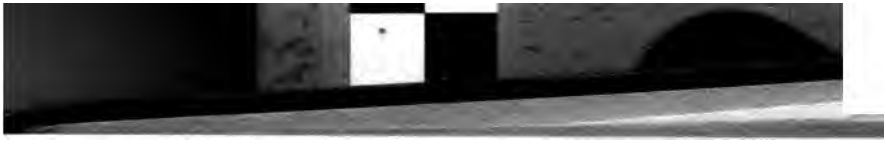


the next two weeks we became fairly intimate, and when I had gained his confidence, he did not hesitate to share with me the extraordinary fund of knowledge and experience that he had acquired in perhaps a hundred different jails, ostrogs, forwarding prisons and etapes. He taught me three or four ingenious ciphers; described to me methods of intercommunication between cells by means of ovens, gas fixtures, bread pills, pendulums, and the New Testament; told me how to hide small objects so that the turnkeys would not find them in a search; and impressed upon my mind the importance, in prison life, of the apparently insignificant things that a man may find and pick up in the courtyard when he is taken out for his walk, such as buttons, pins, old nails, bits of string, pieces of glass, and even half burnt matches and ends of cigarettes. "You can't rap long nor make a clear sound," he said, "with your knuckles. You must have a knocker, and a button or a nail is good. Hide it in the hot-air hole of your stove, or keep it in your mouth when you 're searched. With a pin, or the burnt end of a match, and a scrap of cigarette paper you 've got writing materials. Hide them in the toe of your shoe. Look everywhere, notice everything, save everything, and

listen for all noises. If there 's a Bible in your cell, look for pin holes in the leaves."

In short, my friend the *brodyag* gave me a full course of instruction in the only branch of knowledge that is studied in our prisons, viz., the art of outwitting jailers. Nothing, however, that I learned from him was so useful to me as the checkerboard square. With a knowledge of that diagram and its manifold uses, a prisoner can seldom be wholly isolated, even in a bomb-proof casemate. He may be, as you said, "the only inhabitant of his world," but by means of the knock alphabet he can enter into mental and emotional relations with the inhabitants of other similar worlds around him, and may thus keep his faculties and sympathies alive through months, and even years, of solitude and loneliness.

I was transferred to the fortress early in August. Two gendarmes came to my cell in the middle of the night, waked me, ordered me to dress, and then took me downstairs to a closed and curtained carriage which was waiting for us in the street. When I asked where we were going, they replied, in the words that I was to hear so often in the months to come, "Prikazano ne govoreet." [The orders are not to talk.] I had

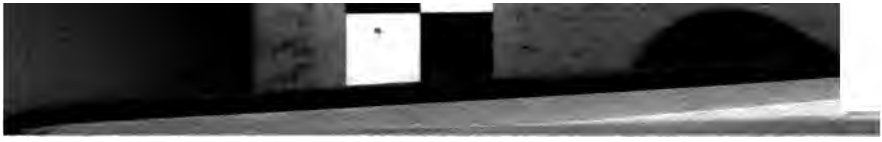


little doubt that our destination was the fortress, and when, after we had crossed a long bridge and turned a corner, I heard the hollow echo of the horses' feet from the sides and roof of a vaulted passage, I knew that we were entering one of the courtyards of our dreaded political prison. In front of a sentinel-guarded door, the gendarmes turned me over to a warden and two soldiers, who took me through a long dimly lighted corridor to my cell. After I had put on the fortress dress—coarse undershirt and drawers, felt slippers and a long loose *khalat*—the jailers retired and I was left alone to acquaint myself with my new and strange environment. Although I was young, strong, and temperamentally buoyant, the cell in which I found myself chilled me with foreboding and dread. It was large and high, because it had been built to hold a heavy cannon; but the walls were black, cold and damp; the heavily grated window was eight feet or more above the floor; and the gloominess and stillness suggested a burial vault, rather than a prison cell, or even a casemate. The only articles of furniture in the room were the ordinary Russian stove of plastered brick; a narrow iron bed, one end of which was fastened to the wall with bolts; a shelf-like iron table, secured in the same way;



a wooden commode with a hinged door; and a wash-basin, into which the guard in the corridor could pour water through a tube. Light was furnished by a small kerosene lamp of brass, which my jailers had left on the table at the head of the bed when they retired.

After examining carefully every object in the cell (in accordance with the counsel of my friend the *brodyag*). I listened attentively for some sound of human life or activity; but the silence was that of a sepulcher. Suddenly, I became conscious of two human eyes, staring at me from a narrow slit in the heavy plank door. As I took a step toward them, they vanished; and with a faint click the hinged cover of the peep-hole dropped into its place. The consciousness that disembodied, impersonal, but vigilant eyes were constantly watching me—as if I were an insect under a microscope—took away the only comfort there was in solitude. Aloneness I could endure; but secret, stealthy surveillance, in addition to loneliness, was intolerable. "However," I thought, "darkness will shelter me from that," and stepping to the table I blew out the light. In a few minutes the key grated in the rusty lock, the door opened, and a soldier entered with another lighted lamp.



"Putting out the light is not allowed," he said, "and if you do it again, we'll put you in a place where it will be dark all the time." I made no reply, but when he had gone I set the lamp on the floor, in the farthest corner of the cell, and threw myself on the bed. Slowly and mournfully, at the quarter hour, the bells in the spire of the fortress cathedral chimed out the air of the liturgical response: "Have mercy, O Lord!"

I fell asleep at last, but the eyes at the slit of the "Judas" and the faint, far-away chiming of church melodies gave form and color to a vivid dream in which I imagined that I had fallen into a death-like trance and was about to be buried. The priest who was conducting the funeral service looked into my coffin through a slit in the lid and saw with comprehending eyes that I was alive; but turning away indifferently he gave the signal for lowering my body into the grave, and then, seizing a handful of earth, he sprinkled it over me while he intoned in a deep bass voice: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and the wide world and all that dwell therein." [4] With the sound of the sprinkled earth in my ears

[4] The equivalent, in the Russian service, of the words "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust" in the English Book of Common Prayer.—G. K.



I awoke. The lamp was still burning, but the gray light of dawn was coming in through the high grated embrasure.

My first day in the fortress was typical of innumerable days to come. Three times, at intervals of four or five hours, a silent soldier handed food to me through a square port-hole in the heavy door. As knives and forks had been used by desperate or insane prisoners as a means of committing suicide, they were not furnished—at least not to me. Solids, such as bread and meat, were cut into slices or mouthfuls which could be eaten from the hand, and for soup and porridge there was provided a wooden spoon. Twice every hour, on an average, a turnkey in the corridor looked through the slit in the door to see what I was doing; but as he was shod in felt slippers, there was no sound of footsteps to warn me of his approach. The grave-like stillness of the casemate was never broken save by the faint distant striking of the quarter hours in the belfry of the fortress cathedral, the firing of a heavy gun on the parapet at noon and the chiming of "God Save the Czar," at midnight. All through the first day of my incarceration, I watched the narrow strip of sky that I could see through the high window, with the hope that the sun would



cross it; but it never did. The window opening was a tunnel through five feet of masonry and not a ray of sunshine could get into it. Late in the afternoon, there was a reflection from the high encircling wall of the courtyard, which brightened for a time the gloomy atmosphere of the cell; but it did not last long. During most of the day I sat in a gray twilight which was like that of a crypt.

My first thought, after I became accustomed to my environment, was that of opening communication, by means of the knock alphabet, with possible neighbors in adjoining cells; but it was neither so safe nor so easy to do this in the fortress as it had been in the Litovski Zamok. There the walls were thin and the guards negligent or indifferent; but here there might be two feet of masonry between me and the occupant of the next cell, and the watchful eyes at the slit of the "Judas" made it difficult to knock without being seen. However, I determined to try. Seating myself near the head of the bed, I buried my face in my crossed arms on the little table, and, out of the corners of nearly closed eyes, watched the peep-hole in the door. Presently its hinged cover rose and the guard looked into the cell. Seeing nothing suspicious in my attitude,



he closed the aperture and went on to another casemate, while I began knocking under cover of my knee. There was no response. After waiting a moment, I knocked again; and then, laying my ear to the wall, listened with concentrated attention. All that I could hear was the beating of my heart. A dozen times that day, in the comparatively safe intervals between the visits of the guard to my door, I rapped first on one side wall and then on the other; but never was there an answering knock. Either the cells next to mine were unoccupied, or the occupants did not hear my signals. At the end of the third day, I became satisfied that I was absolutely isolated. The *brodyag* in the Litovski Zamok had assured me, out of his wide experience, that intercommunication between cells was always possible, in one way or another; but he had never been in the fortress. That labyrinth of stone-walled corridors and casemates was an exception to all prison rules and would have defied, perhaps, even his ingenuity and resourcefulness. I, certainly, could think of no possible way of connecting my world with any other world. So far as social relations were concerned, I might as well have been shut up alone in a chamber of the catacombs, because the guard who handed me



food through the twelve-inch port-hole would not talk, and the eyes which appeared every half hour at the "Judas" slit in the door never gave me a sense of human association, much less of sympathetic human companionship.

It was the policy of the government, at that time, to shake the courage and break down the resolution of newly arrested political offenders by subjecting them, for long periods, to the depressing influences of solitude and gloom. It was thought that when a man had been virtually buried alive for a month or two, he would be more inclined to make full confession, or, at least, that he would be less able to hold his mental grip under a brow-beating and terrifying examination. For this reason, everything was done—particularly at first—to make the conditions of imprisonment as trying as possible to mind and nerves. General Strelnikof even put metallic hoods over the windows of prison cells, in order to deprive the occupants of the cheer and comfort that they might get from sunshine. In the fortress, however, this was not necessary, as the light which came in through the high tunnels of the half-walled-up embrasures was dim and feeble at best.

The first break in the monotony of my life came about a month after my incarceration, when I



was taken to the gloomy chamber of the corps de garde for examination. An official in blue uniform, whom I did not know, asked me a great number of questions with regard to my political activity and my associates; but as I refused to answer most of them, I was sent back to my cell, with the warning that if I continued to maintain this obstinate attitude I might be condemned to penal servitude.

Then began what seemed to me an eternity of loneliness, solitude and gloom. Once a day, a soldier entered the casemate to change the drawer of the commode; three times a day another handed me food through the port-hole; and once a month a third came with scissors to cut my hair and nails; but none of these men would talk, or allow me to talk, and they were changed so often, from corridor to corridor and from bastion to ravelin, that I seldom saw the same face twice. Their visits, however, were the events of my life; and in the intervals between them I had nothing to do but think, pace my cell, listen to the faint, mournful chiming of the cathedral bells, and watch apprehensively for the appearance of the vigilant but impersonal eyes at the slit of the "Judas."

The greatest danger of solitary confinement



under such conditions is that of going melancholy mad, and against this danger I endeavored to guard by inventing occupations for mind and hands. The first thing I tried was saving a part of my daily ration of bread, moistening it in my mouth, and then molding it into figures. This promised well, and I thought it might even be possible to make a few bread chessmen, with which I could think out openings and endings and contrive problems. I soon discovered, however, that this form of activity was prohibited. On the second or third day, the eyes at the peephole happened to notice what I was doing, and a few moments later, a warden entered the casemate, took away my figures, and threatened me with the *kartser* [a perfectly dark punishment cell]. Then I tried unraveling one of my stockings, in order to get yarn with which I could invent knots and practice tying them. This, too, was soon discovered and forbidden. I was finally reduced to mental arithmetic and the composition and memorization of editorials; but these exercises were fatiguing and did not satisfy my craving for occupation and diversion.

The longing for some familiar sound to break the eternal silence led me, one day, to try talking aloud to myself; but this also was prohibited, as



a violation of prison rules, and all that I could do, when the stillness became intolerable, was to hiccough artificially or cough. For three months the only sounds I heard were infrequent orders in a low tone from the generally silent soldiers of the guard; the dull boom of the noon gun from the parapet; and the chiming of "Have Mercy, O Lord," "How Glorious Is Our Lord in Zion," and "God Save the Czar," from the belfry of the fortress cathedral. I continued to rap on the side walls with my knuckles, every three or four days, with a faint hope that a prisoner might have been put into one of the adjoining cells noiselessly during the night; but I never got a response. And yet, the saying of the *brodyag* that intercommunication between cells is always possible proved, at last, to be true. When winter came on, and my health began to fail so noticeably as to attract the attention of the guard, I was taken out to walk, for fifteen or twenty minutes every day, in the walled court-yard. Presuming that other prisoners were taken there separately at other times, and remembering the instructions of the *brodyag* in the Litovski Zamok, I scrutinized closely every square yard of trodden snow, and on the second or third day I noticed, picked up, and transferred



to my mouth, unobserved, an object that looked like a small gray marble. When I had been taken back to my cell and the guard had gone, I examined it, and found it to be a frozen sphere of bread. As soon as it thawed out, I opened it, and discovered a crumpled bit of cigarette paper in which groups of holes had been pricked with a pin. The holes were numerically equivalent to the letters "b-l-o-k" in the checkerboard square, and Blok was the name of one of my classmates in the university. I had lost sight of him after my graduation, and did not know that he had been arrested; but the fact that he was a fellow-prisoner in the fortress gave me at once a feeling of companionship, and the receipt of what was practically a message from him cheered and inspirited me more than anything that had happened to me.

Three or four days later, fortune befriended me again. In the course of one of my walks in the courtyard I picked up a cigarette which had been thrown away by one of the guard because the wrapper had burst, and that same day, at noon, I found in my bowl of soup a small but fairly solid piece of chopped-off bone attached to a mouthful of meat. The cigarette wrapper I concealed in the toe of my felt slipper, and the bone I hid in

the pillow of my bed. I then had paper and a knocker. Neither was immediately available, because I had nothing to mark or pierce the paper with, and nobody to knock to; but I felt sure that I should find a use for them later, and even if I did not, the mere fact that I had something of my own gave me a feeling of satisfaction. In the outside world, a scrap of paper and a bone are not a large capital, but in a world of a single cell they are wealth. With a nail, the *brodyag* in the Litovski Zamok had given me a full course of instruction in telegraphy, applied mathematics, and prison strategy, and with a little moistened bread, half a cigarette and a pin, Blok had given me hope, a feeling of companionship, and a new interest in life.

II. THE GIRL IN NO. 59

The finding of my classmate's name in a frozen sphere of bread, picked up in the courtyard, turned all my thoughts into a new channel. If Blok could get his name through to me by the courtyard route, I could perhaps communicate with him in the same way. He would scrutinize the ground over which he passed even more closely than I did, and would be sure to pick up, in the course of his daily walk, anything that I

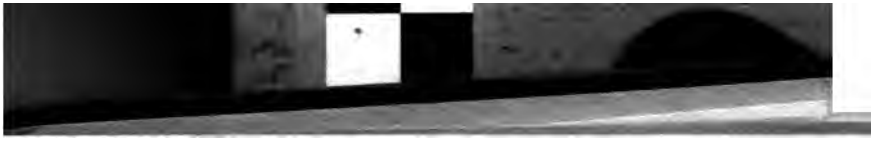
might drop in the course of mine. But how should I make a record? My cigarette wrapper would hold six or eight words, but what should I write them with? Blok had apparently used a pin. I had no pin, and there was absolutely nothing in my cell with which I could make a legible mark on thin paper. I tried rubbing the quill of a small feather from my pillow in the black charred top of the lamp wick; but this experiment failed. In ransacking my memory for methods of recording thought practised by primitive man, I happened, at last, to think of the quipu, and the idea occurred to me that by tying groups of knots in a thread, I could make the numbers of the checkerboard square. Getting an unbroken thread of the necessary length would be difficult, but not impossible. There was material enough in the cotton cover of my pillow, and I could unweave the fabric, a little at a time, while lying in my bed at night. The guard only glanced into the cell when I seemed to be asleep, and there was little probability that he would notice what I was doing.

At the end of three days I had in hand a thread ten or twelve feet long, in which there were more than a hundred knots. These knots, in the checkerboard-square code, made the words:



"Voronin—Well—Courage." I thought at first that I would follow Blok's example by enclosing the record in a sphere of moistened bread; but upon reflection I decided to tangle it up a little and drop it on the ground in a snarl. It would look like an innocent bit of raveling, and the chances were ten to one that the soldiers of the guard would give it no attention, even if they noticed it. On the following day, when I was taken out for my walk, I carried the thread to the courtyard in my mouth, dropped it beside the path near a little tuft of withered grass, and went back to my cell filled with hopeful anticipations. Blok would find the quipu, and it would encourage him, as the finding of his name in a ball of frozen bread had encouraged me. I even hoped that I might get a reply from him.

When I next visited the courtyard, the knotted thread was gone; but the hope that it would elicit a reply was never realized. Day after day, I searched the small pentagonal courtyard with my eyes, as I paced across it from wall to wall; but neither on the path, nor beside it, was there anything that looked promising. Still, I did not allow myself to become discouraged. The *brodyag* in the Litovski Zamok had rapped out the word "understand" more than a hundred



times before he got into communication with me, and I ought to have at least as much patience as a muzhik. Besides that, these attempts at intercommunication gave me something to do and think of.

In the course of the next fortnight, I prepared and dropped in the courtyard three more thread quipus, which I made and knotted while lying in my bed at night. I was also able to utilize, at last, my hoarded cigarette wrapper. In a bowl of fish soup, which was given me one Sunday for dinner, I found a slender bone which I made into an awl by sharpening it on the concrete floor. With this I pricked groups of holes in the paper, to correspond with numbers in the checkerboard square, and inclosing the message in a small bread ball, I dropped it in the courtyard. All of these communications were picked up by somebody. Every one disappeared within forty-eight hours, and most of them within twenty-four; but not one of them ever brought me what could properly be called a response. In the course of January and February, I picked up in the courtyard two balls of bread with scraps of cigarette paper inclosed. One contained a man's name written, apparently, with the end of a half-burnt match, and the other a different name pricked in



the paper with a splinter or a pin. Each of the writers doubtless wished to inform somebody that he had been arrested, or that he was still alive; but neither of them was known to me.

I finally became satisfied, from experiment and reflection, that there was little chance of reaching in this way any particular person. It was like throwing overboard a message in a bottle at sea, with the expectation that it would be picked up by a particular ship. In the Trubetskoi bastion, at that time, there were twenty or thirty political prisoners, and all took their exercise daily, but separately, in that courtyard. Some of them—who had not had the benefit of a *brodyag's* instruction—might not think of looking on the ground for a bit of bread or a piece of string; but most of them probably *would* think of it, and my particular message would be found by the man who happened to follow me. That man might be Blok, but the chances were twenty or thirty to one that it would be somebody else.

So far as I could subsequently learn, no political prisoner who was in the fortress that winter ever succeeded in getting a reply to a message dropped in the courtyard. Many replies were made, but they all went criss-cross and fell into wrong hands. Two of my quipus and the bread-

enclosed cigarette wrapper were found, but the prisoners who discovered them did not know me, and Blok, for whom they were intended, picked up two or three communications from men who were strangers to him. One of his finds, as he afterward told me, was a bit of window glass on which three or four words and a name had been written with grease—probably from soup—which congealed and became visible in the frosty air of the courtyard.

About the middle of January, the severity of the fortress régime, so far at least as it concerned me, was relaxed. After another inquisitorial examination by an officer of the Third Section, I was notified that a single member of my family would be permitted to see me once a month, and that I might have officially approved books in my cell. The first family interview, which was with my mother, proved to be so distressing to us both that I begged her not to come again. It took place in a small gloomy room fitted up for the purpose with two partitions, or screens, of heavy wire netting. I stood behind one screen, and my mother, six or eight feet away, stood behind the other, while between us, at a small table, sat a gendarme, who listened to all that was said, and who warned us that the talk must be strictly



confined to family matters. Any reference to public affairs, or contemporary events, would be followed by the breaking off of the interview and the withdrawal of the privilege. But to look through two wire screens at my mother's tear-wet, grief-stricken face, and exchange a few words with her over the head of an unsympathetic gendarme, was a refined form of torture, rather than a privilege. My changed appearance was a shock, of course, to her, while her sobs and piteous inquiries about my health were very trying emotionally to me. If I could have taken her in my arms and comforted her, the interview might have strengthened and consoled us both; but what can one say across an eight-foot wire cage in which there sits a hostile official? When, at the end of five or ten minutes, the gendarme rose to his feet, I took one last look at my mother's convulsed, agonized face and went back to my cell. Poor mother! Momentous events in the outside world, which she did not dare speak about to me, made her fear that I might be sent into penal servitude.[5]

[5] These events were the beginning of terrorism; and the assassination or attempted assassination of General Mezentsof, Chief of Gendarmes; Governor Krapotkin of Kharkof; General Drenteln, Chief of the Third Section, and finally the Czar.—G. K.



"THE WORLD OF A SINGLE CELL"

More consoling to me than any possible interview through wire screens was the permission to have books in my cell. No volume less than ten years old was allowed, and there were certain restrictions with regard to subjects; but science and standard fiction were not regarded as incendiary, and no objection was made to Darwin's "Origin of Species" (an expurgated Russian edition which I read a second time), nor to the well known works of English and American novelists, with which I was less familiar than with our own literature. I read at that time, I remember, Dickens's "David Copperfield" and "Old Curiosity Shop," and the "Leatherstocking Tales" of your countryman, Cooper. Every book was carefully examined, leaf by leaf, when I returned it, in order to make sure that I had made no marks in it, and that no paper had been torn out of it.

During the remainder of the winter the conditions of my life did not materially change, except in the matter of light. As the season advanced the days became longer, and the lamp in my cell was lighted at 5 P. M, instead of 2, and put out at 7 A. M., instead of 10; but there was never light enough to be cheering, while there was always enough to show the black walls, the

vaulted ceiling, the high grated window, and the eyes at the peep-hole in the door. Eight or ten hours of total darkness every day would have been a relief, because in darkness one's imagination may wander freely, while in the light it is restricted by the barriers of visible reality.

Before the end of the winter my health was seriously impaired. My appetite failed; assimilation of food became imperfect; I grew emaciated; and began to suffer from sleeplessness and neurasthenia. The state of my body, however, gave me less concern than the state of my mind. In spite of all that I could do, I found myself sinking into an apathetic melancholia, from which I was roused only by short paroxysms of acute nervous irritability, in which the chiming of "Have Mercy, O Lord" from the belfry of the fortress cathedral every fifteen minutes, and the appearance of the expressionless eyes at the slit in the door every half hour, seemed to me not only torturing, but absolutely insupportable. But a great change was at hand.

Two or three times in the early spring, when I happened to be awake in the middle of the night, I heard footsteps and the jingling clash of chains in the corridor. I knew that these sounds indicated the bringing in of "important" or "danger-

ous" political prisoners in leg-fetters; but that these additions to the fortress population would affect my life in any way was a thought that never occurred to me. And yet, the new comers were destined to bring about a radical change in the worst of the fortress conditions, and to widen immeasurably the horizon of my world. Throughout the winter, the number of prisoners in the bastion had been so small that the jailers could leave a cell empty on each side of every man. This had the effect of making the isolation in every case complete, because there was no possibility of communicating by means of knocks across an empty cell. Owing, however, to an event in the outside world of which I was ignorant (the adoption of the policy of terror by the extreme wing of the revolutionary party) the number of political arrests suddenly and greatly increased, and in the spring of 1879, the police of the Third Section sent to the fortress more than forty persons who were regarded as too "important," or too "dangerous," to be confined in prisons of the ordinary type.[6] This compelled the fortress authorities to put a prisoner into

[6] At the time to which Voronin refers, General Drenteln, Chief of the Third Section, caused more than a thousand arrests to be made in St. Petersburg alone.—G. K.



every cell, and made it impossible to isolate a man completely by sandwiching him between two cells that were empty. I did not know this, nor did I know that the bastion was rapidly filling up. All of the new men came in the night, and I did not always hear them unless they happened to be in leg-fetters. The hateful sound of clashing chains generally roused me, even when I was asleep, but dozens of prisoners were brought in noiselessly, and nearly all of the empty casemates on my corridor had been filled before I even suspected it.

One morning in the late spring—I think it was May, but I had almost lost count of days and months,—I was startled by what seemed to be a faint regular throbbing in the wall of the casemate to which the head of my bed was bolted. I thought for an instant that it might be hallucination—I was in constant dread of that—but upon pressing my ear to the wall I could hear it distinctly — knock knock — knock knock — knock knock. With shaking hand I replied, using the same signal. Then, in the long disused but well remembered numbers of the checkerboard square came the same inquiry that the *brodyag* had made in the Litovski Zamok:



"Understand?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Thank God! Who is it?"

"Eugene Voronin."

"I don't know the name. Have you been here long?"

"About ten months. Who are you?"

"Olga Novitskaya."

A woman! And she knew the numbers of the checkerboard square! I was so astounded that for a moment I made no response, but I did not lose my wits. The eyes of the guard at the slit of the "Judas" had made too deep an impression on me to be forgotten, even in excitement.

"Stop knocking" I said. "It is nearly time for the guard. Wait until I call you."

When the sentinel looked into the casemate, all was quiet, and I was apparently reading. As soon as he had gone, and I could count with reasonable certainty upon twenty minutes of safety, I knocked again for attention and inquired: "Where are you from?"

"Moscow."

"Do you know anything that has happened outside this year?"

"Yes, almost everything."



"Tell me."

"Have you heard of the attempt to assassinate the Czar?"

"No."

"Then you don't know that Mezentsef" [Chief of Gendarmes] "and Krapotkin" [governor of Kharkof] "have been killed?"

"No; who killed them?"

"Terrorists; by order of the Executive Committee of the revolutionary party. They have just tried to kill Drenteln" [Chief of the Third Section] "and last of all the Czar. There have been thousands of arrests."

"How did you hear? Are you just from outside?"

"No; I have been in the Moscow prison several months. I learned the knock alphabet there, and they could n't keep the news from us; it was signaled to us from outside, with a book and a candle, at night."

"When were you brought here?"

"Yesterday; and I was horribly afraid this morning that my knocks would not be heard or understood—the walls look so thick."

"Is the charge against you serious?"

"I don't know. I 'm not a terrorist, but this is my second term of imprisonment. I suppose



the charge will be revolutionary propaganda. I shall probably go to Siberia, but I'm not afraid."

During the next two or three days, I talked with Miss Novitskaya perhaps a dozen times in the intervals between the visits of the guard to our doors, and obtained from her an outline of her life and experience. She was the daughter of a small landed proprietor living near Tver, and had become interested, even as a young girl, in the educational crusade for the uplift of the peasants which was widely known in the seventies as "going to the people." When, a few years later, she became a student in the Women's University in Moscow, she taught, for a time, in a secret night school for factory operatives; but she was soon arrested, and was held in prison about five months. Upon her release, she joined a circle of fellow students—men and women—who met once a week for the discussion of social and political questions. This circle soon became revolutionary in spirit, if not in practice; and when it was broken up by the police, some of its members resisted arrest, and all were thrown into prison as possible terrorists.

Such, in brief, was my fellow prisoner's history. It was a common story. Hundreds of re-



fined and cultivated young women, at that time, had a similar experience.

After I got into communication with the girl in No. 59, events followed one another so rapidly that I was kept constantly in a state of excitement and emotional tension. Two or three days later, a prisoner was put into No. 57, and he soon began knocking to me. We did not know each other, even by name; but he had just been transferred from another part of the bastion, and could give me news that was even more important to me than that which I had learned from Miss Novitskaya.

"Don't be afraid to knock," he said. "The guard can't stop it, even if they see you. The bastion is full, and there aren't dark cells enough to hold a tenth of us. The worst they can do now is to give us 'dungeon conditions'" [bread and water] "and we can stand that. The dark cells have already been filled."

My new neighbor's statements were soon confirmed. The guard caught me in the act of knocking that very day, but could not—or at least did not—carry out his threat to imprison me in a dark cell. My book and exercise privileges were withdrawn, and I was put on a dungeon diet of bread and water; but what did



I care for books or exercise or even food, when I could once more exchange thoughts and share emotions with sympathetic human beings?

Our jailers, however, were not at the end of their resources. A few mornings later, I called Miss Novitskaya and began to talk to her about recent events in the outside world—events that to me were so new and startling. Her knocking was slower than usual, and she did not make use of abbreviations in spelling, as she had been accustomed to do. Her talk, too, seemed formal and perfunctory, instead of eager and impulsive as it had been before.

"Are you ill?" I inquired.

"No; I am quite well."

"You seem strange in some way."

"I did not sleep much last night, and have a headache."

She then began to talk about revolutionary activity in St. Petersburg, and to inquire the names of persons with whom I had been associated in the circle to which I belonged. I had no reason whatever for distrusting her, but I did not care to give names to any one, and particularly to a woman, who, after long imprisonment, might not have firmness of character enough to hold her mental grip under the strain of a threatening and terri-



fying examination by an experienced officer of police. I therefore broke off the conversation, and said that I would call her again later.

In less than an hour, my neighbor on the other side—a revolutionist named Kobeko—signaled to me and knocked out rapidly the words:

"Don't talk to No. 59. Novitskaya is not there. They transferred her in the night to a cell above yours in the upper tier, and they may have put a police spy in her place. Be careful!"

So this was the explanation of the strangeness, the "headache," and the inquiries for names!

After a moment's reflection, I determined to have another short interview with the spy in No. 59, who knew the checkerboard square, and who had set this trap for me. He responded at once to my call, and, rapping out the words without abbreviations, I said:

"No spy can play the part of an intelligent woman, even behind a wall. You'll succeed with your lies when the just God dies." [Russian proverb.]

He seemed to be taken aback, and for a moment made no reply. Then he rapped out slowly the words:

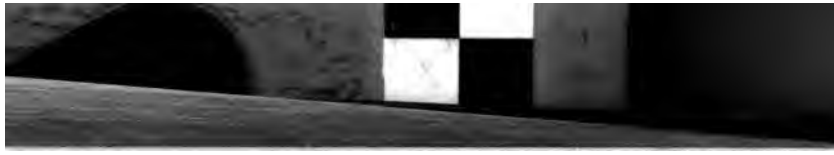
"You traitors will die before God does, and some of you very soon."



This was my first experience with a police spy, and it made me cautious. I did not, however, cease to communicate with Kobeko, and through him I learned that in a neighboring casemate—No. 56 of the lower tier—was my dear friend Dubrovin, a lieutenant in the Willmanstrand infantry regiment, of whose arrest I had not heard. He had been brought to the fortress in leg-fetters, and Kobeko, who also knew him well, seemed to think that his case was very serious, partly because he was an army officer, and partly because he had drawn a weapon and offered resistance to the police at the time of his arrest. The least that he could expect, Kobeko thought, was penal servitude for life. I dreaded an even worse fate than that for him, because it was foreshadowed in the threat of the police spy—"You traitors will die before God does, and some of you very soon."

Two or three days later (I know now that it was the 30th of May) Kobeko called me and said:

"Dubrovin is to be hanged, in one of the courtyards at sunrise to-morrow morning. A priest has just been with him. Can't we bid him good-by with our voices, instead of with knocks. Our window sashes are open, and I think he can hear



us. Let us try, about midnight; it will perhaps be safest then."

Long before the appointed hour, I was standing below my window, thinking what I could say to strengthen and encourage my friend and comrade in the last hours of his life. Under such conditions it would be impossible to say much, and possibly our jailers would prevent us from saying anything.

The bells of the fortress cathedral had just finished chiming the midnight melody—"God Save the Czar"—when I heard a voice crying "Dubrovin!"

As if answering at a roll call, a deeper voice replied:

"Present."

I don't know what I expected Kobeko to say, but I certainly expected him to say something, and yet, Dubrovin's response was followed by perfect silence. A minute passed—two minutes—and still I could hear nothing. Kobeko had apparently broken down under the strain of emotion and could not speak. At last the bass voice called:

"Voronin!"

"I 'm here," I replied.

"Sing Beranger's 'Old Corporal'" [a poem



that had been set to music in Russia and that we had often sung together in happier days].

I was so overcome with sympathy and grief that it seemed impossible to sing, but if Beranger's "Old Corporal" could give my comrade any comfort, I must try. Two or three other prisoners joined in at the second line, and with their support I managed to get through the first stanza.

"Good!" said Dubrovin. "Sing the next verse."

His voice was steady, but something in its quality showed that he was deeply moved. I made a desperate effort to go on, but broke down at the third line. Not one of us was able to finish the second verse, although the melody, without the words, was carried to the end by a clear contralto voice in one of the casemates of the upper tier.

"Thank you," said Dubrovin; "that will do. Good night."

I went away from the window, threw myself on my bed, and bit deep into my arm to keep from sobbing.

None of us ever heard the condemned man's voice again, although he rapped good-by to Kobeko just before he was taken to the scaffold.



We had not said to him what we meant to say, but he had seemed reluctant to speak of his own impending death, and the singing of "The Old Corporal" had so unmanned us all that we could not even bid him good-by without showing him our weakness and thus making it harder for him to die with dignity and self-possession. It would have been different perhaps if we had been in a normal condition, and had been accustomed to use our voices and to hear the voices of others in daily life.

The fortress authorities made no attempt to stop our communication with Dubrovin, although, of course, they were aware of it. Perhaps they thought that by allowing us to talk and listening to what we said they could get information that would prove useful, or perhaps even they were ashamed to deny the poor privilege of a farewell to a man who was to die on the scaffold at dawn. I do not know.

A whole day passed before Kobeko and I tried to communicate with each other again. Scanty food, sleeplessness, and emotional strain had exhausted us both, and in the depression that followed Dubrovin's death we felt no impulse to talk. On the second day, however, he called me and said:



"THE WORLD OF A SINGLE CELL"

"Olga Novitskaya is in the casemate directly over yours in the upper tier. We have found that we can communicate with the upper cells through our tables. They are bolted into the walls, and knocks can be heard through them. Put your ear to your table. Olga will call you."

In less than five minutes, Miss Novitskaya and I were again in communication. Her knocks came to me very faintly, but the stillness in the fortress was so profound that when I pressed my ear to the table I could hear them.

Then began a knock-alphabet correspondence which lasted throughout the whole remaining term of our imprisonment. Making the intimate acquaintance of a woman, without ever seeing her or hearing her voice, was for me a strange experience; but it is not too much, I think, to say that in the next three months I came to know Olga Novitskaya better than I knew any other human being except my mother. We talked of everything—childhood, parents, domestic life, university experience, friends, books, the state of Russia, "going to the people," and the revolutionary movement—and the more completely she revealed herself to me, the more deeply I was impressed by her courage, intelligence, sympathy, cheerfulness, and, at times, even gaiety of spirit.



If she was ever disheartened, or depressed, she did not show it to me. She always looked forward to a brighter future, for Russia and for ourselves; and if I was able to bear with reasonable fortitude the hardships and privations of my last three months in the Trubetskoi bastion, the credit was hers.

About midsummer, when we had been freed from dungeon conditions and had been permitted to resume our daily walks in the courtyard, I celebrated my first birthday in prison. Early in the morning, Olga and Kobeko knocked to me their greetings and good wishes, and a few hours later the former said:

"I have just come from my walk. I picked a sprig of blossoming *kuroslepnik* [chickweed] for your birthday. I could n't send it to you, but I left it at the corner of the bathhouse next the path. Look for it, and imagine that it is a spray of *landysh* [lily of the valley]. It 's all I could find."

The bit of chickweed was withered when I got it, but I have the dry dust of it yet.

The end of our fortress imprisonment came in August. About three o'clock one morning, a warden unlocked and opened the door of my cell and said to me: "Come." I followed him to the



office of the prison, where the commander of the convoy made a careful examination of my person, noted my features and physical characteristics as set forth in a description which he held in his hand, and at last, being apparently satisfied as to my identity, received me formally from the prison authorities. I was then taken to the corps de garde, a large room on the ground floor, at the door of which stood an armed sentry. The spacious but low and gloomy hall was dimly lighted by a few flaring lamps and candles, and in the middle of it, at two long bare tables, sat ten or fifteen men and women, in coarse gray overcoats, drinking tea. Most of these prisoners were condemned convicts from the Alexis ravelin and other little known parts of the fortress, and all were in leg-fetters. Near the door, in a little group, stood six or eight uniformed gendarmes and officers of the detective police, several of them masked, who watched the prisoners intently, whispering now and then among themselves as if communicating to one another the results of their observations. The stillness of the room was broken only by the faint hissing of two or three brass samovars on the tables, and an occasional jingle of chains as one of the convicts moved his feet. There was no conversation,



and a chance observer never would have imagined that the gray-coated figures sitting silently side by side at the tables were near friends, and in some cases relatives, who had long been buried in the casemates of the fortress, and who were looking into one another's faces for the first time in years.

As I entered the room, one of the prisoners, whose face I did not at first recognize but who proved to be Blok, rushed forward to meet me, and as he threw his arms around me he whispered in my ear:

"Don't recognize anybody but me—the gendarmes are watching us." I understood the warning. The police really knew very little about the history and the revolutionary records of some of the politicals who were present, and it was important that they should not be able to get a clue to any one's identity or past history by noting recognitions as prisoner after prisoner was brought in. The incautious manifestation of emotion by one convict, as he met another, might result in the return of both to the casemates of the fortress and their detention there until their mutual relations could be investigated. This was the reason for the silence that prevailed throughout the gloomy hall, and for



the seeming indifference with which the prisoners regarded one another. They were apparently strangers, but in reality they were bound together by innumerable ties of friendship and memories of the past; and as they looked into one another's faces, and noted the changes that time and suffering had wrought, they maintained their composure only by the most heroic effort. On one side of the table sat an old comrade of whom we had heard nothing in years and whom we had all supposed to be dead. On the other side were a young man and his betrothed, who for three years had not seen each other, and who, when thus reunited under the eyes of the gendarmes, did not dare to speak. Near them sat a pale thin woman about twenty-seven years of age, who held in her arms a sickly baby born in a casemate of the fortress, and who looked anxiously at the door every time it opened, with the hope of seeing her husband brought in to join the party. Many of us knew that her husband was dead, but no one dared to tell her that she watched the door in vain.

There were five women present when I entered the room, and I looked eagerly at them all, thinking that Olga might be among them and that I might recognize her; but most of them seemed



too old, and none of them resembled the imaginary picture that I had in my mind. I had nearly abandoned hope, when a soldier came in with a sixth woman—a young girl, twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, with dark hair gathered up in a big high knot; dark luminous eyes with faint shadows under them; a pale brunette complexion; and features that were harmonious and attractive without being perfectly regular.

"It must be Olga!" I said to myself, and as she took a seat at one of the tables I looked at her with almost fierce intensity, as if I could compel her in that way to recognize me. But her glance swept across my face without a sign of interest, and then became fixed on the masked police and the gendarmes. She was perfectly self-controlled, and her pale, resolute face showed neither excitement nor fear.

Nothing could have been more dramatic than the scene in that gloomy hall at half-past four o'clock in the morning, when the last of the prisoners had been brought in. The strange and unnatural stillness, in a room filled with people; the contrast between the blue and silver uniforms of the gendarmes and the leg-fetters and gray overcoats of the convicts; the furtive whispering of the masked police and the silence and assumed

stolidity of the pale-faced men and women whom they watched;—all this would have made the scene striking and impressive, even to a chance spectator. To one, however, who could look beneath the surface of things—who could appreciate the tragic significance of the situation, and see, with spiritual insight, the hot tides of hatred, agony, sympathy, and pity, which surged under those gray overcoats—the scene was not merely striking and impressive, but terrible and heart-rending.

At five o'clock in the morning, we were taken in closed and curtained carriages to the station of the Nikolaievsk Railway. There, under the direction of armed guards, we took seats in a convict car and began our long journey to Siberia. The hard-labor convicts, who were all in leg-fetters, were destined for the mines of Kara; but the administrative exiles—Miss Novitskaya, Blok and I—were to be taken to Semipalatinsk, Ust Kamenogorsk, and Ulbinsk.

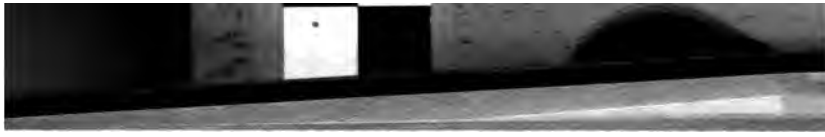
I met Olga, for the first time, in the train. It was incredibly strange to have to make the acquaintance of her body, her voice, her facial expression—everything—for the first time, when I already knew her soul to its profoundest depths. I don't know when I first felt sure that I loved



her, but I think it was when I picked up the withered sprig of chickweed that she left for me, on my birthday, "at the corner of the bathhouse next the path" in the courtyard of the Trubetskoi bastion.

We went up the Irtish River together in a convict barge, and before I bade her good-by at Semipalatinsk, where she was to remain, we were betrothed. Her term of exile was shorter than mine, and when it ended she joined me in Ulbinsk, where we were married soon after you were there.

When I told you, a year ago, that the biggest thing of my life happened to me in the fortress, I warned you that it was very personal. You said that you wanted the story, and here it is.



A SACRILEGIOUS FOX HUNT



VIII

A SACRILEGIOUS FOX HUNT

ONE evening in February, about three years ago, I chanced to be sitting in an apartment of the Hotel Judson, in New York City, talking with a young Polish lawyer from Minsk. He had come to the United States a short time before as a political refugee, and had brought a letter of introduction to me from a valued and trusted friend in St. Petersburg. As he seemed to be a man of culture, courage, and resolution, I felt curious to know what his history had been and what the circumstances were that had forced or induced him to leave his native country. There were reasons enough, of course, for a man's leaving Russia; but I had found in experience that expatriation in such cases is generally due to some specific determining cause, rather than to general political conditions, and that such cause is often connected with an interesting personal story. At the first favorable opportunity therefore I asked my visitor the direct question,



A SACRILEGIOUS FOX HUNT

"What finally made you decide to get out of Russia?"

"A Russian fox," he replied gravely.

The answer was so unexpected and apparently so irrelevant that I was rather taken aback, and looked at him for a moment in puzzled surprise. Then the thought occurred to me that he was probably speaking figuratively, and that the fox in question was some Russian official—a governor or chief of police—who had the cunning and subtlety with which the fox, in Russia as in America, is usually credited.

"Do you mean a real fox," I asked, "or merely a man with foxy characteristics?"

"I mean a real fox," he replied. "If a red Russian fox with pointed ears and a bushy tail had not left tracks in the snow on the edge of a certain piece of woods four or five years ago, I might still be practising my profession in Minsk."

"It sounds like the beginning of a story," I said encouragingly.

"It is a story," he assented, "or rather a tragedy; but it is n't primarily mine. I was finally brought into it, but I played only a subordinate part. The real actors were a Polish landed proprietor and his friends, two or three priests of the Greek Church, a Black Hundred

representative in the Duma, and a Russian fox. It is a common saying that 'Russia is the land of unlimited possibilities,' but, with all your Siberian experience, could you possibly imagine a Russian fox entering into a conspiracy with a Catholic Pole to dishonor the Holy Orthodox Church?"

"Well, hardly," I replied. "The fox in our fairy tales sometimes does queer things, but nothing so queer as that. How did it happen—if it did happen?"

"The story is an almost incredible one," he said, "but the facts are on record in the Circuit Court of Minsk, and also in the archives of the Governing Senate" [the Russian Supreme Court] "in St. Petersburg. The fox is dead; but, if we can trust the findings of a Russian jury, he died in trying to help a Catholic Pole express his hatred and contempt for the Greek faith. Have you been in any of the Polish provinces of Russia since the revolution of 1905?"

"No," I said. "I passed through that part of the Empire several times in earlier years, but I have n't been there since 1901."

"Then I 'd better begin by telling you something about the state of affairs in Russian Poland at the time when this fox case came up. I 'm

afraid you won't believe the story at all if I don't give you the historical background. You remember, perhaps, that the revolutionary movement of 1905–6 received much of its support from the so-called 'alien' nationalities of Russia, particularly the Jews, the Georgians, and the Poles. When it was finally defeated, largely through the bloody pogroms which were planned by the monarchists and executed by the Black Hundreds, the Government determined not only to punish these 'alien' peoples for their revolutionary sympathies and activities, but, as far as possible, to break up their racial or national solidarity and Russianize them at the point of the bayonet. Field courts-martial, punitive expeditions, and sentences of exile almost decimated the male population of the southern and western provinces, and the policy of repression, which has always been rigorous in Poland, became not only more cruel in spirit but more openly terroristic in form. The whole country was under martial law; every official who showed the least sympathy with the Poles was removed or punished; the Black Hundreds and the fanatical priests of the Russo-Greek Church were given an absolutely free hand; while at the same time Polish organizations of all kinds were ruthlessly

crushed. You won't fully realize this unless I give you a few illustrations. In Warsaw at that time there was a Polish benevolent society whose object was to aid poor scholars and students in the schools and universities. It had nearly two hundred local branches in the various Polish provinces, and it was helping thousands of young Poles in straitened financial circumstances to get an education. When Premier Stolypin came into power, and the Black Hundreds raised the cry of 'Russia for the Russians, and away with the aliens!' this benevolent society, which had no political or national aims whatever, was ordered to close its doors and go into liquidation.

"But this is nothing in comparison with other things that were done between 1907 and 1910. The governor of Wilna forbade Polish actors to appear in the theaters of that city; the governor of Grodno would not allow the mourners at the funeral of the Polish novelist Orzheshko to carry memorial wreaths in the procession; the governor of Piotrkof would not permit the Hygienic Society of Lodz to have a section devoted to the beautifying of that city, although it had raised the sum of fifteen thousand rubles for the purpose; and the governor of Warsaw suppressed the Society for the Promotion of Enlightenment,



and the Society of Polish Economists, on the alleged ground that they were 'prejudicial to public order.'

"You may think that in such cases as these governmental repression went to its extreme limits; but far from it! It had no limits. Agricultural societies and consumers' leagues were closed in all the Polish provinces, and even such manifestly innocent organizations as the Society for the Promotion of Rational Amusements, the Society for Mutual Help in Case of Death, the Pioneers of Cremation, the Warsaw Aviation Society, and the Society for the Encouragement of Scientific Bee Culture, were all either suppressed or prohibited. Poles were not allowed to organize or work together for any purpose whatever. In certain public fields they were not even permitted to act separately as individuals. Madame Gurskoi, a well known Polish lady, was forbidden to organize a public sale of flowers in order to raise money for the relief of sufferers from tuberculosis; the bandmaster of Chenstohova was punished for directing his orchestra to play 'God Save Poland'; the Polish Catholic priest of Ganich was arrested and fined for hanging Polish flags from the windows of his church on the occasion of a visit from the bishop of the

diocese; the Catholic priest Putyato was forbidden to give a public lecture on the catacombs of Rome; and even a poor Polish peasant was imprisoned for setting up on his farm a wooden cross inscribed: 'From famine, fire and war, Good Lord deliver us!" Finally, the governor of Podolia closed the Polish School of Refuge in Mohilef, and left fifty children—mostly orphans —without shelter or care.

"These are only a few of the hundreds of acts of oppression and persecution which made the life of the Poles at that time almost insupportable. I refer to them only that you may understand what the atmosphere and background of the fox hunt case were. In a natural and normal environment a Russian fox does n't commit suicide by prearrangement in order that he may help a Catholic Pole to commit sacrilege.

"The story that I am about to tell you is known to the Russian courts as the Knobelsdorf case. In December, 1909, there was living near the town of Mozyr, in the province of Minsk, a Polish landed proprietor named Adam Knobelsdorf. He was a gray-haired man about seventy years of age when I made his acquaintance, but he still retained his bodily activity and vigor, kept horses and hunting dogs, lived largely in the open air,



and took great pleasure in field sports of all kinds. He was a Catholic, of course, in religion, a man of liberal opinions, and a patriotic Pole; but he had shown no more hostility to the Orthodox Church and the Russian Government than was shown by educated Poles generally, and had never been engaged, so far as I know, in any religious or political controversy. But the Black Hundreds and the Orthodox priests hated him, because he was at the same time an *inoverets* [heretic] and an *inorodets* [alien] and, in the opinion of every 'true Russian,' heretics and aliens are the natural enemies of God and the Czar.

"A year or two after the defeat of the Russian revolutionists and the establishment of the reign of terror in the western provinces, this gray-haired Polish gentleman, Adam Knobelsdorf, invited two friends named Zhulkovski and Shamborski, who were spending the Christmas holidays with him, to go on a hunting expedition. There had been a recent fall of snow; the sleighing was good, and they proposed to go with guns and dogs to a forest twelve or fifteen versts away and look for foxes and rabbits. They asked two tenant farmers of the neighborhood—the brothers Urbanchik—to accompany them, and took along



as guide a peasant from a nearby village named Kuks, and a young servant from the Knobelsdorf household whose name I don't now remember. There were seven of them in all, and they started —two or three on horseback and the rest in sleighs —on the second day after Christmas. Four or five of the party carried shot-guns, and they were accompanied by a small pack of hunting dogs. As they drove out of the courtyard, about eight o'clock in the morning, Knobelsdorf's youngest daughter, who kept house for him, waved good-by to him from the veranda with her handkerchief and cried: 'Father! Don't hunt until you get too tired, and be sure to put your heavy cloak around you when you sit down to lunch.'

"During the earlier part of the day the hunters were not very successful in finding game, and after taking lunch beside a frozen brook in the woods they agreed to separate, Knobelsdorf, with his servant, the guide Kuks, and one of the Urbanchik brothers, taking a westerly course, while Zhulkovski, Shamborski, and the other Urbanchik brother went to the eastward. In order that the two parties might keep in touch it was agreed that each should fire a shot occasionally, whether any game were found or not. Shortly after parting from Knobelsdorf the second party





came upon the fresh track of a fox. The dogs took it up eagerly and followed it two or three versts to the edge of the forest, where it ended at a hole in the foundation of an old log church or chapel which had been abandoned fifteen or twenty years before and had fallen into complete decay. One of the dogs wormed his way into the hole and under the plank floor of the building. His excited barking showed that the fox was there, but the animal had apparently taken refuge in a place where there was so little room that the dog could neither get at him nor drive him out. After waiting a while the hunters went into the chapel, the door of which was secured only by a wooden bar. By the dim light which came in through cracks in the boarded windows they could see that the building was practically dismantled, and that its floor was covered with snow, which had blown in through openings in the half-decayed roof. Locating the fox approximately by the sound of the dog's barking, the hunters cleared away the snow and tried to frighten him out by stamping over his head; but the fox was more afraid of the dog than he was of the noise, and would not leave the place where he was apparently safe from attack. The hunters then went outside the chapel and tried by

voice and whistle to recall the dog; but he would not come.

"'Let 's go in and take up a plank in the floor,' suggested Urbanchik. 'In that way we can at least get the dog. We don't want to leave him there.'

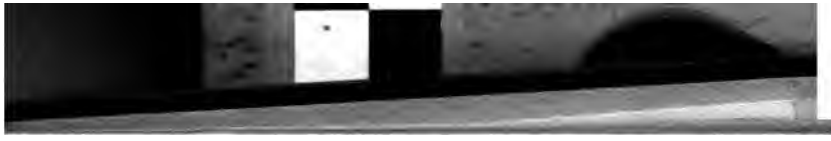
"This seemed to be a practical suggestion, and, returning to the interior, they removed a plank in the half-decayed floor, with the intention of taking out the dog. In so doing, however, they liberated both fox and dog, and the fox came first. Acting, probably, on the impulse of the moment, Zhulkovski fired at him, and, as the distance was short, the charge of rabbit-shot killed him on the spot.

"Late in the afternoon the hunters reassembled at the place where they had left the sleighs, and all went home together, none imagining for a moment that the shooting of a fox within the walls of an old, abandoned, half-ruined chapel was an act of sacrilege which might have tragic consequences.

"Some days later a Russian peasant who happened to be passing the chapel saw the tracks of the hunting party in the snow, and, upon going into the building to investigate, found blood in the place where the fox had been killed.



Through his report, or through the talk of the hunters themselves, who made no secret of the incident, the sacrilegious violation of an Orthodox Russian church by Polish heretics became known to the ecclesiastical authorities, and, seeing an opportunity to show their power and punish the enemies of the true faith, they took it up. They met at first with very little encouragement. The local police officials made an investigation, but, finding no evidence of criminal intent, and regarding the matter as a trivial one, they dismissed the case. Complaint was then made to the district commander [*zemski nachalnik*], but he seemed to be indifferent to it and declared that he had no jurisdiction. Then the case was apparently dropped, but a year or two later a new district commander was appointed, and a second complaint was laid before him. He made inquiry into the circumstances, and apparently satisfied himself that the matter was not important enough to deserve serious attention. At any rate, he declined to take action upon the evidence presented to him. By this time, the incident had come to the knowledge of the Black Hundreds, and they, supported by the influence of Father Yakubovich, a fanatical Russian priest who represented that district in the Duma, and the en-



courage ment and sympathy of Bishop Michael, another intolerant and vindictive ecclesiastic, prevailed upon the investigating magistrate and the procurator in the district town of Mozyr to take the 'sacrilege case' up. This was in the latter part of 1909. The 'nationalistic' policy of Premier Stolypin and the Czar was then the strongest influence in Russia, and local officials everywhere were striving to win the approbation of the 'higher spheres' by harrying the heretics and aliens, and thus showing their devotion to the Church and the Crown. The investigating magistrate in Mozyr decided that there was evidence enough to justify prosecution, and the procurator drew up an indictment charging all of the hunters with sacrilegious violation of a church."

"But why all?" I inquired. "According to your story Knobelsdorf and the members of his party did not participate in the crime, nor even go near the chapel."

"That 's true," replied the young lawyer, "but according to the theory of the prosecution Knobelsdorf deliberately planned the act of sacrilege, and organized the hunting party for the express purpose of desecrating a Russian place of worship."



"But that's still more preposterous," I said. "The hunters were led to the chapel by the track of a fox. How could Knobelsdorf know in advance that a fox on that particular day would run under that particular building?"

"He could n't," replied the lawyer, "unless he had an understanding with the fox. But the priests avoided that difficulty by contending that although the fox was not a *particeps criminis,* he did, nevertheless, give Knobelsdorf an opportunity to commit sacrilege by digging his hole under the floor of that particular building. Their theory was that Knobelsdorf, who lived fifteen versts from the chapel, discovered in some way that a fox had a hole under it. This suggested to him the idea that he might show his contempt for the Russians and their religion by organizing a hunting party, breaking into the chapel, tearing up the floor, digging out the fox, and shooting him in the very place where Orthodox believers had knelt, prayed and worshiped. You see, the priests had to charge premeditation and conspiracy in order to implicate Knobelsdorf at all, because he was not with the party that entered the chapel; he was chasing rabbits three or four versts away. But, besides that, Russian law makes a discrimination between crimes com-



mitted thoughtlessly, or inadvertently, and crimes committed with deliberate intention. For the latter the punishment is much more severe, and the priests and the Black Hundreds did not intend that the aliens and heretics should be let off with a fine or a few days' imprisonment."

"Were all of the hunting party Poles and Catholics?" I inquired.

"No," he replied; "two of them—the servant and the guide—were Orthodox White Russian peasants, who would not be likely to enter into a conspiracy to dishonor their own religion. But that did n't make any difference. The priests and the Black Hundreds were ready to sacrifice two Orthodox believers, if necessary, in order to strike successfully at five heretical Poles; so they accused them all.

"With the indictment and arrest of Knobelsdorf and his companions my connection with the story begins. I was then only an assistant advocate [*pomoshnik prisazhni poverenni*] but I helped to prepare the defense. None of us thought at that time that the case could possibly have serious consequences. It seemed perfectly evident that there was neither premeditation nor conspiracy, and that the shooting of the fox in the old, abandoned, half-ruined chapel was the



result partly of accident, and partly of thoughtlessness and excitement. But we soon discovered that there was a determination on the part of priests and Court to convict the prisoners of premeditated sacrilege without reference to facts or probabilities.

"The trial, which began in the Minsk Circuit Court at Mozyr on the 2nd of June, 1910, was held before a jury, but with closed doors. Five Russian priests were present, ostensibly as witnesses; but the application of a Polish Catholic priest for admission was denied. The public, of course, was excluded, with the exception of three or four near relatives of the accused. The procurator was assisted by B. V. Nikolski, a Black Hundred advocate from St. Petersburg, who had a reputation for oratory and who was supposed to represent particularly the ecclesiastical authorities of the diocese. The whole case turned, of course, on the interpretation given to the facts. Zhulkovski, Shamborski, and Urbanchik admitted the killing of the fox in the chapel, but said that it was an impulsive and unpremeditated act, and that the chapel seemed to them to be an abandoned and half-ruined building which had no more sacredness than the forest around it. Knobelsdorf and his companions declared that

they were several versts away when the other party came upon the fox tracks, and that they knew nothing of the killing until they were informed of it after the two parties had come together. The procurator, on the other hand, contended that Knobelsdorf and his Catholic associates had artfully contrived the whole scheme six months prior to its execution, with the deliberate intention of desecrating an Orthodox place of worship and thus showing their contempt for the true faith. The heretics, he said, not only killed the fox in the very shadow of God's altar, but pierced with twenty-two shot-holes a portrait of the Savior which was hanging on the wall. He admitted that the chapel was old and somewhat out of repair, but he denied that it had been abandoned. At his request, the jurors were taken to the sacred edifice, and there were shown not only the pierced portrait of the Savior, but a cross and a copy of the New Testament which were lying on the altar. These things were supposed to prove that the chapel was at least in occasional use as a place of worship.

"We found, some weeks later, a Russian peasant who affirmed under oath that the cross and the New Testament were placed on the altar just before the inspection, and that he accompanied

the priest who carried them there. Unfortunately we did not get this testimony in time to use it at the trial. I have no doubt myself that the pierced portrait of the Savior was also manufactured and put in place in order to make an impression on the devout peasant jury, because shot fired at a fox on the floor could not possibly pierce a canvas portrait hanging at a height of six feet against the wall.

"I need not go further into the details of the trial. Nikolski, the oratorical advocate from St. Petersburg, wept, beat his breast, and implored the jury to punish men who were capable of desecrating God's altar and firing shot into the face of the blessed Redeemer, while the Presiding Judge, after ruling strongly against the defense at every opportunity, closed his charge to the jury in these words:

"'If, in spite of all these proofs, you return a verdict of acquittal, it will show that this Court disregards the intention of the Supreme Authority' [the Czar], 'which was to create a tribunal of equity and justice. A court that showed such disrespect would not only be a farce, but would be injurious and dangerous, because it would increase by its verdicts of acquittal the number of unpunished crimes.'



A SACRILEGIOUS FOX HUNT

"In view of the biased tendency of the whole charge, and the flagrant illegality of its concluding sentences, counsel for the defense took formal exceptions and requested the Presiding Judge to note them in a protocol as the ground for a possible appeal. They were asked to put their objections in writing, and they did so.

"Half an hour later the jury came in with a verdict which affirmed the guilt of all the accused without exception. The Court thereupon sentenced five of them to penal servitude: Knobelsdorf for eight years, and the others for periods ranging from two to six years, with deprivation of all civil rights, and forced colonization at the expiration of their respective penal terms. Mercy was shown only to the two Orthodox White Russian peasants, who were let off with two years of simple imprisonment.

"Counsel for the condemned men carried the case at once to the Governing Senate [the Russian Supreme Court], where it was heard, with closed doors, on the 12th of August, 1910.[1] It

[1] Closing the doors to reporters and the public at the hearing of a case in the Senate on appeal is very exceptional. It has occurred only twice in recent years. The only outsiders admitted at the hearing of the Knobelsdorf appeal were Bishop Michael, the intolerant ecclesiastic from the Minsk diocese, and a representative from the "Novoe





NAPOLEONDER



IX

NAPOLEONDER [1]

A LEGEND OF THE RUSSIAN PEASANTS

Transcribed by Alexander Amphiteatrof
Translated by George Kennan

LONG ago—but not so very long ago, our grandfathers remember it—the Lord God wanted to punish the people of the world for their wickedness. So he began to think how and by what means he could punish them, and he called a council of his angels and archangels to talk about it. Says the archangel Michael to the Lord God, "Shake them up, the recreants, with an earthquake."

"We've tried that," says the Lord God. "Once upon a time we jolted to pieces Sodom and Gomorrah, but it did n't teach them anything. Since then pretty much all the towns have become Sodoms and Gomorrahs."

[1] The Russian peasant's name for Napoleon Bonaparte. The final syllable, "der," has perhaps been added because to the ear of the peasant "Napoleon" sounds clipped and incomplete, as "Alexan" would sound to us without the "der."



"How about famine?" says the archangel Gabriel.

"It would be too bad for the babies," replies the Lord God. "Famine would kill the babies; and, besides that, the cattle must have food—they 're not to blame."

"Drown them with a flood," suggests Raphael.

"Clean impossible!" says the Lord God. "Because, in the first place, I took an oath once that there should be no more floods, and I set the rainbow in the sky for an assurance. In the second place, the rascally sinners have become cunning; they 'll get on steamboats and sail all over the flood."

Then all the archangels were perplexed and began to screw about in their seats, trying to invent or think of some calamity that would bring the wicked human race to its senses and stir up its conscience. But they had been accustomed, time out of mind, to do good rather than evil; they had forgotten all about the wickedness of the world, and they could n't think of a single thing that would be of any use.

Then suddenly up comes Ivan-angel, a simple-minded soul whom the Lord God had appointed to look after the Russian muzhiks. He comes up and reports: "Lord, Satan is outside there, ask-

ing for you. He does n't dare to come in, because he smells bad;[2] so he 's waiting in the entry."

Then the Lord God was rejoiced. "Call Satan in!" he ordered. "I know that rogue perfectly well, and he has come in the very nick of time. A scamp like that will be sure to think of something."

Satan came in. His face was as black as tanned calfskin, his voice was hoarse, and a long tail hung down from under his overcoat.

"If you so order," he says, "I 'll distribute your calamities for you with my own hands."

"Go ahead with your distribution," says the Lord God; "nobody shall hinder you."

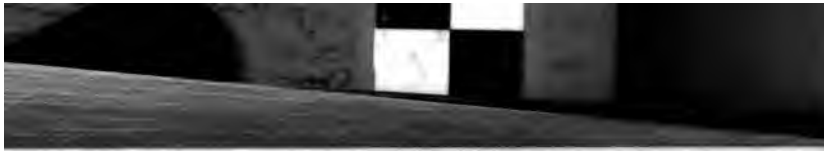
"Will you permit me," Satan says, "to bring about an invasion of foreigners?"

The Lord God shook his finger at Satan and cried: "Is that all you can think of? And you so wise!"

"Excuse me," Satan says. "Why does n't my plan show wisdom?"

"Because," replies the Lord God, "you propose to afflict the people with war, and war is just what they want. They 're all the time fighting among themselves, one people with another, and that 's the very thing I want to punish them for."

[2] That is, with the sulphurous odor of hell.—G. K.



"Yes," says Satan, "they 're greedy for war, but that 's only because they have never yet seen a real warrior. Send them a regular conqueror, and they 'll soon drop their tails between their legs and cry, 'Have mercy, Lord—save us from the man of blood!' "

The Lord God was surprised. "Why do you say, my little brother, that the people have never seen a real warrior? The Czar Herod was a conqueror; the Czar Alexander subdued a wonderful lot of people; Ivan-Czar destroyed Kazan; Mamai-Czar, the furious, came with all his hordes; and the Czar Peter, and the great fighter Anika—how many more conquerors do you want?"

"I want Napoleonder," says Satan.

"Napoleonder!" cries the Lord God. "Who 's he? Where did he come from?"

"He 's a certain little man," Satan says, "who may not be wise enough to hurt, but he 's terribly fierce in his habits."

The Lord God said to the archangel Gabriel—"Look in the Book of Life, Gabriel, and see if we 've got Napoleonder written down."

The archangel looked and looked, but he could n't look up any such person.

"There is n't any kind of Napoleonder in the



Book," he says. "Satan is a liar. We have n't got Napoleonder written down anywhere."

Then Satan replies: "It is n't strange that you can't find Napoleonder in the Book of Life, because you write in that Book only the names of those who were born of human fathers and mothers, and who have navels. Napoleonder never had a father or a mother, and, moreover, he has n't any navel—and that 's so surprising that you might exhibit him, for money."

The Lord God was greatly astonished. "How did your Napoleonder ever get into the world?" he says.

"In this way," Satan replies. "I made him, as a doll, just for amusement, out of sand. At that very time, you, Lord, happened to be washing your holy face, and, not being careful, you let a few drops of the water of life splash over. They fell from heaven right exactly on Napoleonder's head, and he immediately took breath and became a man. He is living now, not very near nor very far away, on the island of Buan, in the middle of the ocean-sea. There is a little less than a verst of land in the island, and Napoleonder lives there and watches geese. Night and day he looks after the geese, without eating, or drinking, or sleeping, or smoking; and his

only thought is—how to conquer the whole world."

The Lord God thought and thought, and then he ordered, "Bring him to me."

Satan at once brought Napoleonder into the bright heaven. The Lord God looked at him, and saw that he was a military man with shining buttons.

"I have heard, Napoleonder," says the Lord God, "that you want to conquer the whole world."

"Exactly so," replies Napoleonder; "that's what I want very much to do."

"And have you thought," says the Lord God, "that when you go forth to conquer you will crush many peoples and shed rivers of blood?"

"That's all the same to me," says Napoleonder; "the important thing for me is—how can I subdue the whole world?"

"And will you not feel pity for the killed, the wounded, the burned, the ruined, and the dead?"

"Not in the least," says Napoleonder. "Why should I feel pity? I don't like pity. So far as I can remember, I was never sorry for anybody or anything in my life, and I never shall be."

Then the Lord God turns to the angels and says, "Messrs. Angels, this seems to be the very



fellow for our business." Then, to Napoleonder, he says: "Satan was perfectly right. You are worthy to be the instrument of my wrath, because a pitiless conqueror is worse than earthquake, famine, or deluge. Go back to the earth, Napoleonder; I turn over to you the whole world, and through you the whole world shall be punished."

Napoleonder says: "Give me armies and luck, and I 'll do my best."

Then the Lord God says, "Armies you shall have, and luck you shall have; and so long as you are merciless, you shall never be defeated in battle; but remember that the moment you begin to feel sorry for the shedding of blood—of your own people or of others—that moment your power will end. From that moment your enemies will defeat you, and you shall finally be made a prisoner, be put into chains, and be sent back to Buan Island to watch geese. Do you understand?"

"Exactly so," says Napoleonder; "I understand, and I will obey. I shall never feel pity."

Then the angels and the archangels began to say to God: "Lord, why have you laid upon him such a frightful command? If he goes forth so, without mercy, he will kill every living soul on earth—he will leave none for seed."





"Be silent!" replied the Lord God. "He will not conquer long. He is altogether too brave; because he fears neither others nor himself. He thinks he will keep from pity, and does not know that pity, in the human heart, is stronger than all else, and that not a man living is wholly without it."

"But," the archangels say, "he is not a man—he is made of sand."

The Lord God replies: "Then you think he did n't receive a soul, when my water of life fell on his head?"

Napoleonder gathered together a great army, speaking twelve languages, and went forth to war. He conquered the Germans, he conquered the Turks, he subdued the Swedes and the Poles. He reaped as he marched, and left bare the country through which he passed. And all the time he remembers the condition of success—pity for none. He cuts off heads, burns villages, outrages women, and tramples children under his horses' hoofs. He desolates the whole Mohammedan kingdom—and still he is not sated. Finally he marches on a Christian country—on Holy Russia.

In Russia, then, the Czar was Alexander the Blessed—the same Czar who stands now on the



top of the column in Petersburg-town and blesses the people with a cross, and that's why he is called "the Blessed."

When he saw Napoleonder marching against him with twelve languages, Alexander the Blessed felt that the end of Russia was near. He called together his generals and field-marshals and said to them, "Messrs. Generals and Field-marshals, how can I check this Napoleonder? He is pressing us terribly hard."

The generals and field-marshals reply, "We can't do anything, your Majesty, to stop Napoleonder, because God has given him a word."

"What kind of a word?"

"This kind—'Bonaparty.'"

"But what does 'Bonaparty' mean, and why is a single word so terrible?"

"It means, your Majesty, six hundred and sixty-six—the number of the Beast[3]—and it is terrible because when Napoleonder sees, in a battle, that the enemy is very brave, that his own strength is not enough, and that his own men are falling fast,[4] he immediately conjures with this

[3] A reference to the Beast of the Apocalypse. "The number of the beast is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six." Rev. xiii, 18.

[4] Literally, "lying down with their bones."

same word, 'Bonaparty,' and at that instant—as soon as the word is pronounced—all the soldiers that have ever served under him and have died for him on the field of battle come back from beyond the grave. He leads them afresh against the enemy, as if they were alive, and nothing can stand against them, because they are a ghostly force, not an army of this world."

Alexander the Blessed grew sad; but, after thinking a moment, he said: "Messrs. Generals and Field-marshals, we Russians are a people of more than ordinary courage. We have fought with all nations, and never yet, before any of them, have we laid our faces in the dust. If God has brought us, at last, to fight with corpses—His holy will be done! We will go against the dead!"

So he led his army to the field of Kulikova, and there waited for the miscreant Napoleonder. And soon afterward Napoleonder, the evil one, sends him an envoy with a paper saying, "Submit, Alexander Blagoslovenni, and I will show you favor above all others."

But Alexander the Blessed was a proud man, who held fast his self-respect. He would not speak to the envoy, but he took the paper that the envoy had brought and drew on it an insulting



picture, with the words, "Is this what you want?" and sent it back to Napoleonder.

Then they fought and slashed one another on the field of Kulikova, and, in a short time or a long time, our men began to overcome the forces of the enemy. One by one they shot or cut down all of Napoleonder's field-marshals, and finally drew near to Napoleonder himself.

"Your time has come!" they cry to him. "Surrender!"

But the villain sits there on his horse, rolling his goggle eyes like an owl, and grinning.

"Wait a minute," he says coolly. "Don't be in too big a hurry. A tale is short in telling, but the deed is long a-doing."

Then he pronounces his conjuring word, "Bonaparty"—six hundred and sixty-six—the number of the Beast.

Instantly there is a great rushing sound, and the earth is shaken as if by an earthquake. Our soldiers look—and drop their hands. In all parts of the field appear threatening battalions, with bayonets shining in the sun, torn flags waving over terrible hats of fur, and tramp! tramp! tramp! on come the thousands of phantom men, with faces yellow as camomile, and empty holes under their bushy eyebrows.





NAPOLEONDER

Alexander, the Blessed Czar, was stricken with terror. Terror-stricken were all his generals and field-marshals. Terror-stricken also was the whole Russian army. Shaking with fear, they wavered at the advance of the dead, gave way suddenly in a panic, and finally fled in whatever direction their eyes happened to look.

The brigand Napoleonder sat on his horse, holding his sides with laughter, and shouted, "Aha! My old men are not to your taste! I thought so! This is n't like playing knuckle-bones with children and old women! Well, then, my honorable Messrs. Dead Men, I have never yet felt pity for any one, and you need n't show mercy to my enemies. Deal with them after your own fashion."

"As long as it is so," replied the corpse-soldiers, "we are your faithful servants always."

Our men fled from Kulikova-field to Pultava-field; from Pultava-field to the famous still-water Don; and from the peaceful Don to the field of Borodino, under the very walls of Mother Moscow. And as our men came to these fields, one after another, they turned their faces again and again toward Napoleonder, and fought him with such fierceness that the brigand himself was de-

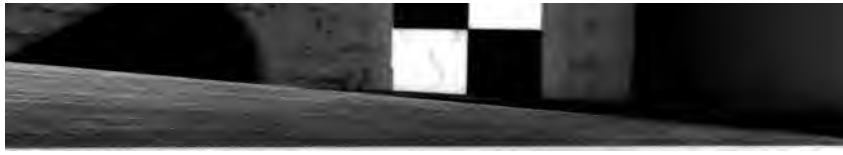


lighted with them. "God save us!" he exclaimed; "what soldiers these Russians are! I have not seen such men in any other country."

But, in spite of the bravery of our troops, we were unable to stop Napoleonder's march; because we had no word with which to meet his word. In every battle we pound him, and drive him back, and get him in a slip-noose; but just as we are going to draw it tight and catch him, the filthy, idolatrous thief bethinks himself and shouts "Bonaparty!" Then the dead men crawl out of their graves in full uniform, set their teeth, fix their eyes upon their officers, and charge! And where they pass, the grass withers and the stones crack. And our men are so terrified by these unclean bodies that they can't fight against them at all. As soon as they hear that accursed word "Bonaparty," and see the big fur hats and the yellow faces of the dead men, they throw down their guns and rush into the woods to hide.

"Say what you will, Alexander Blagoslovenni," they cry, "for corpses we are not prepared."

Alexander the Blessed reproached his men, and said, "Wait a little, brothers, before you run away. Let 's exert ourselves a little more. Dog that he is, he can't beat us always. God has set a limit for him somewhere. To-day is his, to-

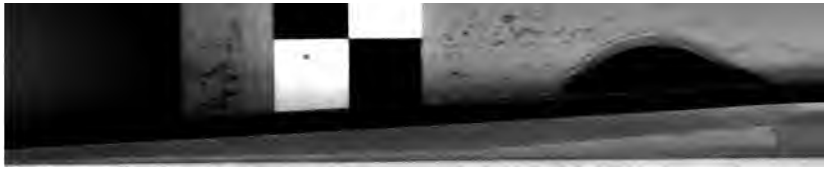


morrow may be his, but after a while the luck perhaps will turn."

Then he went to the old hermit-monks in the caves of Kiev and on the island of Valaam, and bowed himself at the feet of all the archimandrites and metropolitans, saying, "Pray for us, Holy Fathers, and beseech the Lord God to turn away his wrath; because we have n't strength enough to defend you from this Napoleonder."

Then the old hermit-monks and the archimandrites and the metropolitans all prayed, with tears in their eyes, to the Lord God, and prostrated themselves until their knees were all black and blue and there were big bumps on their foreheads. With tearful eyes, the whole Russian people, too, from the Czar to the last beggar, prayed God for mercy and help. And they took the sacred icon of the Holy Mother of God of Smolensk, the pleader for the grief-stricken, and carried it to the famous field of Borodino, and, bowing down before it, with tearful eyes, they cried, "O Most Holy Mother of God, thou art our life and our hope! Have mercy on us, and intercede for us soon."

And down the dark face of the icon, from under the setting of pearls in the silver frame,



trickled big tears. And all the army and all God's people saw the sacred icon crying. It was a terrible thing to see, but it was comforting.

Then the Lord God heard the wail of the Russian people and the prayers of the Holy Virgin, the Mother of God of Smolensk, and he cried out to the angels and the archangels, "The hour of my wrath has passed. The people have suffered enough for their sins and have repented of their wickedness. Napoleonder has destroyed nations enough. It's time for him to learn mercy. Who of you, my servants, will go down to the earth—who will undertake the great work of softening the conqueror's heart?"

The older angels and the archangels did n't want to go. "Soften his heart!" they cried. "He is made of sand—he has n't any navel—he is pitiless—we 're afraid of him!"

Then Ivan-angel stepped forward and said, "I 'll go."

At that very time Napoleonder had just gained a great victory and was riding over the field of battle on a greyhound of a horse. He trampled with his horse's hoofs on the bodies of the dead, without pity or regret, and the only thought in his mind was, "As soon as I have done with Rus-



sia, I 'll march against the Chinese and the white Arabs; and then I shall have conquered exactly the whole world."

But just at that moment he heard some one calling "Napoleonder! O Napoleonder!" He looked around, and not far away, under a bush on a little mound, he saw a wounded Russian soldier, who was beckoning to him with his hand. Napoleonder was surprised. What could a wounded Russian soldier want of him? He turned his horse and rode to the spot.

"What do you want?" he asked the soldier.

"I don't want anything of you," the wounded soldier replied, "except an answer to one question. Tell me, please, what have you killed me for?"

Napoleonder was still more surprised. In the many years of his conquering he had wounded and killed a multitude of men; but he had never been asked that question before. And yet this Russian soldier did n't look as if he had anything more than ordinary intelligence. He was just a young, boyish fellow, with light flaxen hair and blue eyes—evidently a new recruit from some country village.

"What do you mean—'killed you for'?" said Napoleonder. "I had to kill you. When you



went into the army, did n't you take an oath that you would die?"

"I know what oath I took, Napoleonder, and I 'm not making a fuss about dying; but you—why did you kill me?"

"Why should n't I kill you," said Napoleonder, "when you were the enemy—that is, my foe—come out to fight me on the field of Borodino?"

"Cross yourself, Napoleonder!" said the young soldier. "How could I be your foe, when there has never been any sort of quarrel between us? Until you came into our country, and I was drafted into the army, I had never even heard of you. And here you have killed me—and how many more like me!"

"I killed," said Napoleonder, "because it was necessary for me to conquer the world."

"But what have I got to do with your conquering the world?" replied the soldier. "Conquer it, if you want to—I don't hinder—but why did you kill me? Has killing me given you the world? The world does n't belong to me. You 're not reasonable, brother Napoleonder. And is it possible that you really think you can conquer the whole world?"

"I 'm very much of that opinion," replied Napoleonder.

The little soldier smiled. "You're really stupid, Napoleonder," he said. "I'm sorry for you. As if it were possible to conquer the whole world!"

"I'll subdue all the kingdoms," replied Napoleonder, "and put all peoples in chains, and then I'll reign as Czar of all the earth."

The soldier shook his head. "And God?" he inquired. "Will you conquer him?"

Napoleonder was confused. "No," he finally said. "God's will is over us all; and in the hollow of his hand we live."

"Then what's the use of your conquering the world?" said the soldier. "God is over all; therefore the world won't belong to you, but to him. And you'll live just so long as he has patience with you, and no longer."

"I know that as well as you do," said Napoleonder.

"Well, then," replied the soldier, "if you know it, why don't you reckon with God?"

Napoleonder scowled. "Don't say such things to me!" he cried. "I've heard that sanctimonious stuff before. "It's of no use—you can't fool me—I don't know any such thing as pity."

"Indeed!" said the soldier, "is it so? Have a care, Napoleonder! You are swaggering too

much. You lie when you say a man can live without pity. To have a soul, and to feel compassion, are one and the same thing. You have a soul, have n't you?"

"Of course I have," replied Napoleonder; "a man can't live without a soul."

"There! you see!" said the soldier; "you have a soul and you believe in God. How, then, can you say you don't know any such thing as pity? You *do* know! And I believe that at this very moment, deep down in your heart, you are mortally sorry for me; only you don't want to show it. Why, then, did you kill me?"

Napoleonder suddenly became furious. "May the pip seize your tongue, you miscreant! I 'll show you how much pity I have for you!" And, drawing a pistol, Napoleonder shot the wounded soldier through the head. Then, turning to his dead men, he said, "Did you see that?"

"We saw it," they replied, "and as long as it is so, we are your faithful servants always."

Napoleonder rode on.

At last night comes; and Napoleonder is sitting alone in his golden tent. His mind is troubled, and he can't understand what it is that seems to be gnawing at his heart. For years he has been at war, and this is the first time such a

thing has happened. Never before has his soul been so filled with unrest. And to-morrow morning he must begin another battle—the last terrible fight with the Czar Alexander the Blessed, on the field of Borodino.

"Akh!" he thinks, "I 'll show them to-morrow what a leader I am! I 'll lift the soldiers of the Czar into the air on my lances and trample their bodies under the feet of my horses. I 'll make the Czar himself a prisoner, and I 'll kill or scatter the whole Russian people."

But a voice seemed to whisper in his ear, "And why? why?"

"I know that trick," he thought. "It 's that same wounded soldier again. All right. I won't give in to him. 'Why? Why?' As if I knew why! Perhaps if I knew why, I should n't make war."

He lay down on his bed; but hardly had he closed his eyes when he saw, by his bedside, the wounded soldier—young, fair-faced, blond-haired, with just the first faint shadow of a mustache. His forehead was pale, his lips were livid, his blue eyes were dim, and in his left temple there was a round black hole made by the bullet from his, Napoleonder's, pistol. And the

ghastly figure seemed to ask again, "Why did you kill me?"

Napoleonder turns over and over, from side to side, in his bed. He sees that it 's a bad business. He can't get rid of that soldier. And, more than all, he wonders at himself. "What an extraordinary occurrence!" he thinks. "I 've killed millions of people, of all countries and nations, without the least misgiving; and now, suddenly, one miserable soldier comes and throws all my ideas into a tangle!"

Finally Napoleonder got up; but the confinement of his golden tent seemed oppressive. He went out into the open air, mounted his horse, and rode away to the place where he had shot to death the vexatious soldier.

"I 've heard," he said to himself, "that when a dead man appears in a vision, it is necessary to sprinkle earth on the eyes of the corpse. Then he 'll lie quiet."

Napoleonder rides on. The moon is shining brightly, and the bodies of the dead are lying on the battlefield in heaps. Everywhere he sees corruption and smells corruption.

"And all these," he thought, "I have killed."

And, wonderful to say, it seems to him as if all

the dead men have the same face—a young face with blue eyes, and blond hair, and the faint shadow of a mustache—and they all seem to be looking at him with kindly, pitying eyes, and their bloodless lips move, just a little, as they ask, without anger or reproach, "Why? Why?"

Napoleonder felt a dull, heavy pressure at his heart. He had not spirit enough left to go to the little mound where the body of the dead soldier lay, so he turned his horse and rode back to his tent; and every corpse that he passed seemed to say, "Why? Why?"

He felt no longer the desire to ride at a gallop over the dead bodies of the Russian soldiers. On the contrary, he picked his way among them carefully, riding respectfully around the remains of every man who had died with honor on that field of blood; and now and then he even crossed himself and said: "Akh, that one ought to have lived! What a fine fellow that one was! He must have fought with splendid courage. And I killed him —why?"

The great conqueror never noticed that his heart was growing softer and warmer, but so it was. He pitied his dead enemies at last, and the evil spirit went away from him, and left him in all respects like other people.



The next day came the battle. Napoleonder led his forces, cloud upon cloud, to the field of Borodino; but he was shaking, as if in a chill. His generals and field-marshals looked at him and were filled with dismay.

"You ought to take a drink of vodka, Napoleonder," they say; "you don't look like yourself."

When the Russian troops attacked the hordes of Napoleonder, on the field of Borodino, the soldiers of the great conqueror at once gave way.

"It 's a bad business, Napoleonder," the generals and field-marshals say. "For some reason the Russians are fighting harder to-day than ever. You 'd better call out your dead men."

Napoleonder shouted at the top of his voice, "Bonaparty!"—six hundred and sixty-six!—the number of the Beast. But, cry as he would, he only frightened the jackdaws. The dead men did n't come out of their graves, nor answer his call. And Napoleonder was left on the field of Borodino alone. All his generals and field-marshals had fled, and he sat there alone on his horse, shouting, "Bonaparty! Bonaparty!"

Then suddenly there appeared beside him the smooth-faced, blue-eyed, fair-haired Russian recruit whom he had killed the day before. And

the young soldier said: "It's useless to shout, Napoleonder. Nobody will come. Yesterday you felt sorry for me and for my dead brothers, and because of your pity your corpse-soldiers no longer come at your call. Your power over them is gone."

Then Napoleonder began to weep and sob, and cried out, "You have ruined me, you wretched, miserable soldier!"

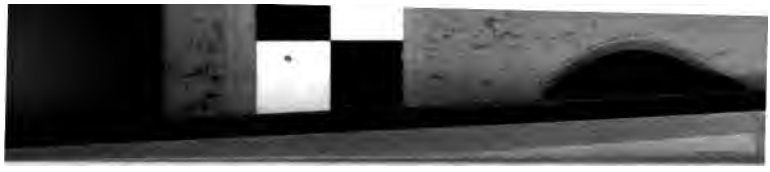
But the soldier (who was Ivan-angel, and not a soldier at all) replied: "I have not ruined you, Napoleonder; I have saved you. If you had gone on in your merciless, pitiless course, there would have been no forgiveness for you, either in this life or in the life to come. Now God has given you time for repentance. In this world you shall be punished, but there, beyond, if you repent of your sins, you shall be forgiven."

And the angel vanished.

Then our Don Cossacks fell on Napoleonder, dragged him from his horse, and took him to Alexander the Blessed. Some said: "Napoleonder ought to be shot!" Others cried: "Send him to Siberia!" But the Lord God softened the heart of Alexander the Blessed, and the merciful Czar would not allow Napoleonder to be shot or sent to Siberia. He ordered that the great con-

queror be put into an iron cage, and be carried around and exhibited to the people at country fairs. So Napoleonder was carried from one fair to another for a period of thirty summers and three years—until he had grown quite old. Then, when he was an old man, they sent him to the island of Buan to watch geese.





THE ZHELTUGA REPUBLIC



X

THE ZHELTUGA REPUBLIC

IN the extreme northern part of the Chinese Empire, about one thousand miles from the city of Pekin and an equal distance from the coast of the Pacific, there is a wild, mountainous, densely wooded, and almost trackless region, known to Chinese geographers as Khelun-tsan. It forms a part of the great frontier province of Manchuria, and lies, somewhat in the shape of an equilateral triangle, between the rivers Argun and Amur, which separate it from eastern Siberia on the north, and the rivers Ur-son, Khalga-gol, and Sungari, which bound it on the south. A post-road leads along its southern frontier from Khailar to the capital town of Tsitsikhar, and there is a fringe of Cossack stations and Manchu pickets on the rivers Argun and Amur, which form the other two sides of the triangle; but the vast region bounded by these thin lines of settlement is a wilderness of forests and mountains, traversed only by Tungus or

Manchu hunters, and as little known to the Chinese who own it as to the Russians whose territory it adjoins. Near the apex of this triangle, between two lateral spurs of the Great Khingan Mountains, there is a deep, wooded valley called the Zhelta, through which flows a shallow tributary of the small Manchurian river Albazikha. It is an insignificant ravine, only ten or fifteen miles in length, and, from a topographical point of view, it does not differ in any essential respect from thousands of other nameless ravines which lie among the wooded mountains of Manchuria and the Trans-Baikal; but it has a distinction not based upon topography and not dependent upon geographical situation,—a distinction arising out of its relation to human interests and human institutions. In this wild, lonely valley was born, a little more than twelve years ago, the first and only true republic that ever existed on the continent of Asia, and its birthplace was a Tungus grave.

In the year 1883 a Tungus hunter and trapper called Vanka, who spent most of his life roaming through the forests and over the mountains of Manchuria and Transbaikalia, came, with a bundle of furs, to the shop of a merchant named Seredkin, in the little Cossack post of Ignashina

on the upper Amur, and reported that while digging a grave in the valley of the Zhelta for his mother, who had died during a temporary stay there, he had found, at a depth of three or four feet in the gravelly soil, a number of small flakes and nuggets of yellow metal which had the appearance of gold. He wished the merchant to examine them and tell him what they were worth. Seredkin looked at the specimens, subjected them to a few simple tests, and soon satisfied himself that gold they were. He purchased them at a good price, promised Vanka a suitable reward if he would act as guide to the place where they were found, and immediately made preparations to equip and send into Manchuria a small prospecting party, under the direction of a trusted and experienced clerk named Lebedkin. Two or three days later this party crossed the Amur, marched eighteen or twenty miles through the forest to the valley of the Zhelta, and began digging a short distance from the grave in which the Tungus had buried his mother and out of which he had taken the gold. From the very first panful of earth washed they obtained a quarter of a teaspoonful or more of the precious dust, and the deeper they sank their prospecting pits the richer the gravel became. In a dozen or more places,

and at various depths ranging from ten to fourteen feet, they found gold in amazing quantities; and Lebedkin, the chief of the party, became so excited—not to say crazed—by the vision of sudden wealth that he drank himself to the verge of delirium tremens, and was finally carried back to Ignashina in a state of alcoholic coma and complete physical collapse. The laborers who had been digging under his direction thereupon threw off their allegiance to their employer, formed themselves into an artel,[1] and proceeded to prospect and mine on their own joint account and for their own common benefit.

Seredkin tried to keep the matter a secret while he organized and equipped a second party; but the news of the discovery of a wonderfully rich gold placer on Chinese territory, only fifteen or twenty miles from the Amur, was too important and too exciting to be either suppressed or concealed. From the village of Ignashina it was carried to the neighboring Cossack post of Pokrofka, from there to Albazin, from Albazin

[1] An artel is a Russian form of labor union, in which from six to fifty or more men unite to do a particular piece of work, or to labor together for a certain specified time. It is virtually a small joint stock company, whose members share equally in the work, expenses, and profits of the enterprise in which they are engaged.

to Blagoveshchinsk, and thence to all parts of eastern Siberia. Before the end of the spring of 1884 gold-seekers bound for the new Eldorado were pouring into Ignashina at the rate of one hundred and fifty a day, and the little Cossack settlement was suddenly transformed into a pandemonium of noise, tumult, drunkenness, fighting, and wild, feverish excitement. In vain the Russian authorities at Chita and Blagoveshchinsk tried to stop the frenzied rush of miners and prospectors into Manchuria, first by threatening them with arrest, and then by forbidding station-masters on the government post-roads to furnish them with transportation. The tide of migration could no more be stopped in this way than the current of the Amur could be arrested or diverted by means of a paper dam. The excited gold-seekers paid no attention whatever to official proclamations or warnings, and if they could not obtain horses and vehicles at the post-stations, they hired telegas [2] from the muzhiks, or canoes from the Amur Cossacks, and came into Ignashina, by land and by water, in ever increasing numbers. As fast as they could obtain food and equipment they crossed the Amur in skiffs,

[2] Small, springless, four-wheeled carts, drawn usually by a single horse.

shouldered their picks, shovels, and bread-bags, and plunged on foot into the wild, gloomy forests of Manchuria. Before the 1st of September, 1884, the Tungus grave in the valley of the Zhelta was surrounded by the tents and log huts of at least three thousand miners; and a more motley, heterogeneous and lawless horde of vagabonds and adventurers never invaded the Chinese Empire. There were wandering Tungus from the mountains of Transbaikalia; runaway Russian laborers from the east-Siberian mines of Butin Brothers, Niemann, and the Zea Company; Buriats and Mongols from the province of Irkutsk; discharged government clerks and retired ispravniks[3] from Nerchinsk, Stretinsk, Verkhni Udinsk, and Chita; exiled Polish Jews from the Russian Pale of Settlement; Chinese laborers and teamsters from Kiakhta and Maimachin; a few nondescript Koreans, Tatars, and Manchus from the lower Amur; and finally, more than one thousand escaped convicts—thieves, burglars, highwaymen, and murderers—from the silver-mines of Nerchinsk and the gold-mines of Kara.

As the valley of the Zhelta lies outside the lim-

[3] Local officials who act as chiefs of police and magistrates in a Russian district.

its and beyond the jurisdiction of Russia, and is separated by hundreds of miles of trackless wilderness from the nearest administrative center in China, its invaders were not subject to any authority nor bound by any law; and its history, for a time, was little more than a record of quarreling, claim-jumping, fighting, robbery, and murder. Gradually, however, the better class of Russian miners, impelled by the instinct of association and coöperation which is so marked a characteristic of the Slavonic race, began to organize themselves into artels, whose members contributed equally to the common treasury, worked together for the common weal, shared alike in the product of their industry, and defended as a body their individual and corporate rights. As these little groups or associations, united by the bond of a common interest, began to grow stronger and more coherent, they took counsel together and drew up a series of regulations for the uniform government of the artels and for the better protection of their members. These regulations, however, did not have the force of a constitution, binding upon all citizens of the camp, nor were they intended to take the place of a civil or criminal code. They resembled rather, in form and effect, the by-laws of

a chartered corporation; and they had no recognized or enforceable validity, outside the limits of the artels that adopted and sanctioned them. In the camp at large, every man who was not a member of an artel defended himself and his property as best he could, without regard to law or authority. For some months after the establishment of the camp there was no law except the law of might, and no recognized authority other than the will of the strongest; but as the feeling of solidarity, fostered by the artels, gradually permeated the whole mass of the population, an attempt was made to establish something like a general government. The logic of events had convinced both honest men and criminals that unless they secured life and property within the limits of the camp, they were all likely to starve to death in the course of the winter. Traders would not come there with food, and merchants would not open shops there, unless they could be assured of protection for themselves and safety for their goods. Such assurance could be given them only by an organized government, willing and able to enforce the provisions of a penal code. At the suggestion, therefore, of some of the artels, the whole body of miners was invited to assemble

in what is known to the Russian peasants as a *skhod,* a Slavonic variety of the New England town-meeting. At this *skhod,* which was largely attended, the situation was fully and noisily discussed. Robbery and murder were declared to be crimes of which the camp, as a community, must take cognizance; a penal code was adopted, providing that robbers should be flogged and murderers put to death; and a committee of safety, consisting of one representative from the artels, one from the escaped convicts, and one from the unattached miners, was appointed to govern the camp, enforce the law, and act generally as the executive arm of the *skhod.*

The effect of this action was to diminish, for a time, the frequency of robbery and murder, and greatly to increase the population and promote the prosperity of the camp. The news that a government had been organized and three starosts elected to maintain order and punish crime in the "Chinese California" soon spread throughout eastern Siberia, and gave a fresh impetus to the tide of migration across the Manchurian frontier. Russian peasant farmers from Transbaikalia—a much better and steadier class than the runaway mining laborers—



caught the gold fever, and started for the camp; merchants from Nerchinsk, Stretinsk, and Chita sent thither caravans of horses and camels laden with bales of dry goods, hardware, and provisions; actors, jugglers, gamblers, musicians, and amusement-purveyors of all sorts from the east-Siberian towns, joined in the universal rush, and before midwinter the gold-placer of Zheltuga, as it was then called, had grown into a rough, noisy, turbulent mining-town of more than five thousand inhabitants.

To a traveler ascending the Zhelta River from the Amur, in the autumn of 1884, the site of the town presented itself as a nearly level valley-bottom about a quarter of a mile in width, strewn with water-worn boulders and heaps of gravel from the pits and trenches of the gold-diggers, and bounded on its northwestern and southeastern sides by high hills covered with forests of spruce, pine, and silver birch. In the foreground was a flat, grassy plain, known to the miners as "Pitch-Penny Field," where the underlying gravel was not rich enough to pay for working, and where the surface, consequently, had not been much disturbed. From this field stretched away, on the right-hand side of the valley, under the shadow of the mountain, a double line of



tents, yurts,[4] *bologans*,[5] and log houses, to which the miners had given the name Millionaire Street, for the reason that it adjoined the richest part of the placer. This street was a mile and a half or more in length, and along it, at short intervals, were scattered the principal shops of the town, each surmounted by a flag; twenty or thirty drinking-saloons with evergreen boughs nailed over their doors; and about a dozen hotels and "houses for arrivers," whose rudely painted sign-boards bore such names as The Assembly, The Marseilles, The Zheltuga, The California, and The Wilderness Hotel. Filling the spaces between the semi-public buildings, on both sides of the narrow, muddy street, stood the shedlike barracks of the artels, the flat-roofed, earth-banked yurts of the convicts, and the more carefully built houses of the well-to-do Russian peasants, all made of unhewn logs chinked with moss, and provided with windows of cheap cotton sheeting. But Millionaire Street, although it was the business and aristocratic quarter of the town, did not by any means comprise the whole of it. On the

[4] Quadrangular log huts, shaped like deeply truncated pyramids, and banked and roofed with sods or earth.

[5] Conical structures of logs, roughly resembling wigwams or tepees, and sometimes mounted on four high posts and reached by a ladder.



opposite or southeastern side of the valley there was a straggling encampment of skin tents, birch-bark lodges, and wretched hovels, tenanted by poor Chinese, Tungus, and Buriats, who were employed as day laborers by the artels; and from the southeastern end of Millionaire Street there was a thin, broken line of detached huts and cabins, extending up the Zhelta almost to its source. The camp, as a whole, therefore, occupied an area about a quarter of a mile wide and four miles long, with the head of the ravine at one end, Pitch-Penny Field at the other, and a desert of stones, gravel, ditches, flumes, and sluices between.

At the beginning of the winter of 1884–85, there had been staked out, within the productive limits of the placer, about four hundred claims, more than two-thirds of which were being worked. The stratum of gravel and sand from which the gold was obtained probably formed at one time the bed of the Zhelta River. It lay at an average depth of about twelve feet, under a covering of alluvial soil known to the miners as *torf,* which, doubtless, in the course of ages, had been gradually washed down into the valley from the circumjacent hills. This thick superficial layer of *torf* had to be removed, of course,

before the auriferous sand could be reached; and as the labor of taking it away was very great, all the individual miners, and nearly all the artels, had adopted what was then known in Siberia as the *orta,* or subterranean method of working a deep placer. By this method, the *torf,* instead of being removed, was undermined. The digger sunk a shaft to the bottom of the auriferous stratum, and then drove tunnels through the pay-gravel in every direction to the boundary lines of his claim, leaving the *torf* intact above as a roof, and supporting it, if necessary, with timbers. The gravel taken out of these subterranean tunnels and chambers was hoisted to the surface through the shaft by means of a large wooden bucket attached either to a windlass or to an old-fashioned well-sweep, and the gold was then separated from the sand by agitation with water in shallow pans, troughs, or cradles. The pay-gravel of Zheltuga yielded, on an average, about four ounces of gold per ton; and the precious metal was worth on the spot from twelve to sixteen dollars an ounce. In many cases the yield was much greater than this. One fortunate digger unearthed a mass of virgin gold weighing five pounds; and lucky finds of nuggets varying in weight from one ounce to ten ounces were of fre-

ent occurrence. Even in parts of the placer t were comparatively barren isolated "pock-" were sometimes found that yielded gold at rate of twelve ounces to the Russian pood, or re than fifty-five pounds to the ton. In the ly part of 1885 it was estimated that the Zhel-a placer, as a whole, was yielding about rty-five pounds of gold per day, and the ac-nulated stock on hand weighed 3600 pounds l represented a cash value of nearly $1,000,000. The currency of the camp, for the most part, s gold-dust, which, when transferred from d to hand, was weighed in improvised bal-es with ordinary playing-cards. An amount dust that would just balance four cards, of ndard size and make, was everywhere accepted



bits" of a quartered playing-card; that is, at one-eighth of a zolotnik in dust. Russian paper money circulated to some extent, but the supply was insufficient, and gold-dust was the ordinary medium of exchange.

Once a week, on Saturday, the lower part of the valley, near Pitch-Penny Field, was turned into a great market or bazaar, where traders and Cossacks from the neighboring settlements sold meat, flour, hard-bread, tea, sugar, soap, candles, clothing, and hardware, and where thousands of miners, from all parts of the placer, assembled to purchase supplies. In no other place and at no other time could the population and life of the great mining-camp be studied to better advantage. The field was dotted with white cotton tents and rude temporary booths, erected to shelter the goods of the traders; scores of telegas, filled with produce and provisions, were drawn up in long parallel lines, with shaggy Cossack ponies tethered to their muddy wheels; the strident music of hand-organs and concertinas called the attention of the idle and the curious to yurts and *bologans* where popular amusement was furnished in the form of singing, juggling, or tumbling; and in and out among these tents, booths, wagons, and *bologans* surged a great horde of

rough, dirty, unshaven miners: some munching bread or cold meat as they elbowed their way from one booth to another; some crowding around a wagon loaded with apples and dried Chinese fruits from the valley of the Ussuri; some stuffing their multifarious purchases into big gray bags of coarse Siberian linen; and all shouting, wrangling, or bargaining in half a dozen Asiatic languages.

No American mining-camp, probably, ever presented such an extraordinary diversity of types, costumes, and nationalities as might have been seen any pleasant Saturday afternoon in that Manchurian market. Thin-faced, keen-eyed Polish Jews, in skull-caps and loose black gabardines, stood here and there in little stalls exchanging Russian paper money for gold-dust, which they weighed carefully with dirty playing-cards in apothecaries' balances; sallow, beardless Tungus hunters, whose fur hoods, buckskin tunics, and tight leather leggings showed that they had just come from the mountain fastnesses of Transbaikalia, offered gloves, mittens, and squirrel-skin blankets to red-shirted Russian peasants in flat caps and high-topped boots; wrinkle-eyed Mongol horsemen, dressed in flapping orange gowns and queer dishpan-shaped felt

hats, rode through the crowded market-place on wiry ponies, leading long files of solemn, swaying camels laden with goods from Verkhni Udinsk or Nerchinski Zavod; uniformed Siberian Cossacks, standing at the tail-boards of the small four-wheeled wagons in which they had brought rye flour and fresh fish from the Amur, exchanged loud greetings or rough jokes with the runaway convicts who strolled past, smoking home-made cigarettes of acrid Circassian tobacco rolled in bits of old newspaper; and now and then, strangely conspicuous in black frock coat and civil service cap, might be seen a retired ispravnik, or a government clerk from Chita, buying tea and white loaf sugar at the stall of a Chinese trader.

On the outskirts of the bazaar amusements and diversions of all kinds were provided in abundance, and from half a dozen different directions came the discordant music of hand-organs and balalaikas[7] calling attention to lotteries, peep-shows, exhibitions of trained Chinese monkeys, and large circular tents in which acrobats and tumblers performed feats of strength or agility before crowds of shouting and applauding spec-

[7] A Russian variety of guitar, with three or four strings and a triangular sounding-board of thin seasoned wood.

tators. In one place, a huge tiger, caught in a trap on the lower Amur and confined in an iron cage, was an object of wonder and admiration to a throng of swarthy, bullet-headed Buriats; in another, a professional equestrian in dirty spangled tights exhibited the horsemanship of the *haute école* to a circle of hard-featured ruffians in gray overcoats, who were easily recognizable as escaped convicts from the Siberian mines, and who still wore on their backs, in the shape of two yellow diamonds, the badge of penal servitude.

Taken as a whole, the great bazaar, with its unpainted booths, its white cotton tents, its long lines of loaded wagons, its piles of merchandise, its horses, cattle, and double-humped Bactrian camels, its music, its vari-colored flags, and its diversified population of traders, miners, Cossacks, Russian peasants, runaway convicts, and Asiatic nomads, formed a picture hardly to be paralleled in all the Chinese Empire, and a picture strangely out of harmony with the solemn mountains and primeval forests of the lonely Manchurian wilderness in which it was framed.

The government of so heterogeneous and lawless a population as that assembled in the valley of the Zhelta presented, of course, a problem of

extraordinary difficulty; and it is not at all surprising that the first attempt of the artels to provide the camp with a civil administration proved to be a failure. The three starosts elected by the *skhod* were not men of much education or character; their authority was not backed, as it should have been, by an adequate police force; and even when their intentions were good and their orders judicious, they were virtually powerless to carry them into effect. The runaway convicts from the mines in east Siberia, who composed at least a third of the whole population, soon discovered that the starosts had neither the nerve nor the power to enforce order and honesty in the only way in which they could be enforced,—with the hangman's rope and the lash,—and therefore they promptly resumed their criminal activity. Theft, claim-jumping, fighting, and robbery with violence soon became as common as ever; the influence and authority of the administration steadily declined as one board of starosts after another was discharged for cowardice or inefficiency; men of good character from the artels refused to take positions which no longer had even the semblance of dignity or power; and finally the government itself became criminal, the latest board of starosts partici-

pated in a crime and fled across the Siberian frontier with their plunder, and the camp relapsed again into virtual anarchy.

This state of affairs continued for several weeks, in the course of which time no attempt was made either to reëstablish the ineffective and discredited administration of the starosts, or to substitute for it a form of government better adapted to the circumstances of the case. Petty crimes of various sorts were committed almost daily in all parts of the placer; but as the sufferers from them were, for the most part, the weaker and less influential members of the community, public feeling was not roused to the point of renewed action until the latter part of December, 1884, when a brutal murder, in the very heart of the camp, brought everybody to a sudden realization of the dangers of the situation. One of the members of an artel of escaped convicts, who was known to have had in his possession a considerable quantity of gold-dust, was found one morning in his tent, dead and cold, with his head and face beaten into an almost unrecognizable mass of blood, hair, brains, and shattered bones. From the position and appearance of the body, it was evident that the murderer had crept into the tent at a late hour of the night and killed his

victim, while asleep, with repeated blows of a heavy sledge-hammer, which was found, lying in a pool of half-frozen blood, beside the bed. The dead man's gold-dust had disappeared, and there was no clue to the identity of the assassin.

The news of this murder spread in a few hours to all parts of the placer; and thousands of miners, attracted either by morbid curiosity or by a desire to verify the statements they had heard, came to look at the disfigured corpse, and to discuss with one another means of preventing such crimes. In the absence of an authorized and responsible government, no one ventured to remove or bury the body, and for nearly a week it remained untouched, just where it had been found, as a ghastly and impressive object-lesson to the citizens of the camp. Meanwhile, the need of a strong and effective government, to maintain order, protect life, and punish crime, was earnestly and noisily discussed in hundreds of tents and cabins throughout the valley; and the outcome of the discussion was the calling of another *skhod,* composed of delegates representing the four great classes into which the population of the camp was divided,—the artels, the convicts, the unattached miners, and the Asiatics. At this *skhod* it was decided to organize a republican



form of government, with a single chief or president, who should be authorized to draft a code of laws, and who should be supported in the rigorous enforcement of them by the full armed strength of the camp. As the starosts elected under the previous régime had been common peasants, wholly without administrative experience or training and almost wholly without education, and as the result of their efforts to maintain order had been general dissatisfaction and disappointment, it was resolved that the president to be chosen in the second experiment should be a man of character and ability from the cultivated class, and, if possible, a man who had had some experience as an administrative or executive officer. The number of such men in the community was extremely small; but among them there happened to be a retired government official —a clerk from one of the provincial departments of Siberia—named Fasse, whose personal bearing, dignity, and upright character had attracted general attention, and who had the respect and confidence of all the best men in the camp. Upon Fasse the choice of the *skhod* fell; and a deputation, bearing a plate of bread and a small cup of salt on a wooden tray, was sent to apprise him of the assembly's action, and to congratu-

late him upon his unanimous election as "first President of the Zheltuga Republic."

Fasse, who was not ambitious of distinction in this field, and who fully appreciated the serious nature of the responsibilities that would devolve upon the "first President," was disposed to decline the honor; but when the *skhod* agreed in advance to sanction any laws that he might suggest, to recognize and obey any assistants whom he might appoint, and to give him the fullest possible coöperation and support, he decided that it was his duty, as a good citizen, to waive personal feeling, accept the position, and give the community the benefit of all the knowledge and experience he had. His first official act was to divide the territory which constituted the placer into five districts (subsequently known as "states"), and to invite the residents of each district to elect two *starshinas,* whose duty it should be to act in their respective localities as justices of the peace, and who should together constitute the President's Council.

In the course of three or four days, *starshinas* were elected in all of the districts (two of them Chinese from the Asiatic quarter of the camp), certificates of election were duly signed and returned to the President, and the Council was



summoned to draw up a code of laws and regulations for the government of the republic. The result of their deliberations was the following constitution, which was submitted to the *skhod* at a special meeting, and adopted without dissent:—

On this —— day of ——, in the year of our Lord 188–, we, the Artels and Free Adventurers of the Zheltuga Command, imploring the blessing of Almighty God upon our undertaking, do hereby promise and swear implicit obedience to the authorities elected by us at this *skhod,* and to the rules and regulations drawn up by them for the government of the camp, as follows:—

1. The territory belonging to the Zheltuga Command shall be known as the "Amur California," and shall be divided into five districts or states.

2. The officers of the republic shall be a President and ten *starshinas,* who shall be elected by the *skhod,* and who shall hold office for a period of four months, or until the *skhod* relieves them from duty. Executive and judicial authority, in each one of the five districts, shall be vested in two *starshinas,* and the ten *starshinas* together shall constitute the President's Council. These offi-



cers of the government shall wear on their left arms, as evidence of their official authority, brass badges bearing in incised letters the words "Starshina of the Amur California, ——th District." The President shall receive a salary of four hundred rubles, and each starshina a salary of two hundred rubles, per month.

3. Every artel and every miner in the camp shall come to the assistance of the *starshinas* at the first call, by night or day, and shall aid them in enforcing the law and maintaining order. Cooperation in the infliction of punishment for crime, under direction and by order of the President, the Council, or the *starshinas,* shall be an imperative obligation of every citizen.

4. The lightest punishment that shall be inflicted for an offense committed within the territorial limits of the Amur California shall be banishment from the camp without right of return. More serious crimes shall be punished by flogging, with whip or rods, the number of blows to be proportioned to the criminal's health or strength, but not to exceed in any case five hundred. Murder shall be punished in accordance with the Mosaic law of "an eye for an eye," and the murderer shall be put to death in the same manner and with the same weapon that he em-



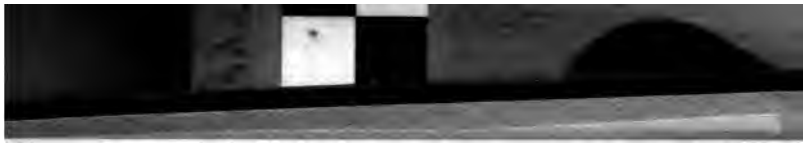
ployed in killing his victim. Every sentence of the authorities shall be executed, if possible, forthwith, and in no case shall punishment be delayed more than twenty-four hours.

5. *Starshinas,* in their respective districts, shall have the right to punish, up to one hundred blows, at their own discretion and without consulting either the President or the Council; but they shall make to the President, at a fixed hour every day, a report of all such cases, and an official statement of the condition of affairs in their districts.

6. The authorities shall have the right to put any person suspected of criminal conduct under the surveillance of any artel or individual, paying the latter for such supervision at the rate of one ruble per day; and the artel or individual shall be held responsible for such suspect's safeguard and good behavior.

7. The selling of spurious and manufactured gold, and also the wearing of a *starshina's* badge without authority, as a means of intimidating or extorting money from any person, shall be punished with five hundred blows of a blackthorn rod.

8. In gambling with cards, the wagering of clothing, tools, implements, or other like objects



of absolute necessity is strictly prohibited, upon penalty of severe punishment, as is also the pledging or pawning of such objects for a loan or debt.

9. The firing of a gun or pistol at any hour of the day or night, without sufficient and legal cause, and the carrying of deadly weapons while in a state of intoxication, are strictly forbidden.

10. Among those who have recently come to the Amur California, ostensibly to work, are a large number of persons who have no regular occupation, and who hang about restaurants and saloons, living a drunken and disorderly life or maintaining themselves by dishonest card-playing. Their evil example exerts a demoralizing influence upon the great mass of honest and industrious miners, and the citizens of the camp are requested, in their own interest and for the sake of public tranquillity, to point out such persons to the authorities, in order that they may be banished from the placer.

11. Every artel or individual miner who employs, or ostensibly employs, laborers shall personally see that such laborers are actually at work, or shall make a report of them to the district *starshinas,* so that the latter may either set them at work or expel them from the settlement.



12. In view of the fact that many persons who have come here are unable, for various reasons, to acquire mining territory or find work, and are therefore in a suffering condition, and in view of the further fact that certain artels are nominally in possession of much more territory than they are able to develop, it has been decided to regard all unoccupied and unworked claims as public lands, and to distribute them among honest and sober citizens who have not been able to find either work or unclaimed ground. Such distribution will begin in seven days from the date hereof. Henceforth the number of claims that artels will be permitted to hold in reserve without development shall be limited to two for an artel of nine men, four for an artel of eighteen men, and six for an artel of twenty-seven men. Relying upon the generosity and humanity of all Russians, the government hereby gives notice that undeveloped and unworked claims held by artels in excess of the numbers above set forth will hereafter be treated as public lands, and will be distributed in accordance with the best interests of the community among the poorer members thereof.

13. A fund to defray the expenses of the government shall be raised by means of taxes im-



posed at the discretion of the *skhod* upon all liquor-sellers, restaurant-keepers, traders, and merchants.

14. Every person who has a store, shop, or trading-place within the limits of the placer shall cause a flag to be displayed on the building in which such business is carried on. Failure to do so within three days from the date hereof shall be punished with a fine of from twenty-five to one hundred rubles.

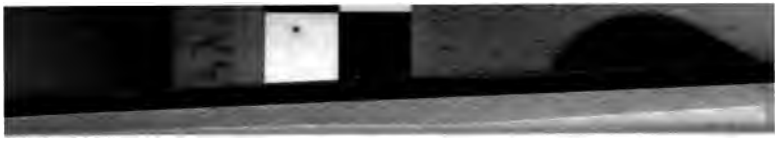
15. Every merchant or trader who pays a tax or license fee for the right to carry on his business shall obtain from the person authorized to collect the tax a duly executed receipt for the same, bearing the seal of the government and the signature of the President, and shall post this receipt in a prominent place in his shop, store, restaurant, or saloon.

16. The sale of spirituous liquor within the limits of the camp by persons who have no regular place of business is strictly and absolutely forbidden. Persons who have regular places of business shall not sell spirituous liquor until they have obtained special permission to do so. For every bottle sold without such permission the seller shall pay a fine of from twenty-five to one hundred rubles.

17. The laws of the Zheltuga Free Adventurers shall apply without exception to all citizens of the camp, regardless of rank, condition, nationality, or previous allegiance. Officers of the government, however, chosen by election, shall not be punished for illegal actions until they shall have been tried by the Council, found guilty, and dismissed from the service. They shall then be tried and punished as private citizens under the general law.

18. Every artel or individual coming hereafter within the territorial limits of the Amur California shall appear within three days at the headquarters of the government to read and sign these laws. Those who fail to make such appearance within three days from the time they cross the Amur will be proceeded against as persons unwilling to submit to the authority and obey the laws of the Zheltuga Command of Free Adventurers of the Amur California.

19. As evidence that the President and starshinas referred to herein have been chosen by us of our own free will, we append hereto our signatures, and we hereby promise to treat them with honor and respect. Those of us who fail to do so shall be severely punished as disturbers of the peace and insulters of the officers whom the Com-



mand has trusted as honest and impartial guardians of its safety and tranquillity.

(Signed) —— ——

—— ——

Electors.

Five copies of the constitution, or code of laws, were prepared in manuscript, and delivered to the *starshinas* of the five districts, who called local meetings and read the documents aloud to the electors. They were then signed by representatives of the latter and returned to the President, who affixed to them the seal of the Amur California, and deposited them in a place of security as the organic law of the Chinese republic.

With the beginning of the year 1885 the new government entered upon the discharge of its duties, and the inevitable conflict arose between law and authority on one side and lawlessness and crime on the other. If there were any doubt of the ability of the new administration to maintain its existence and enforce its decrees, such doubt was speedily removed by the boldness, promptness, and energy with which the new officials acted. Supported by a majority of the citizens backed by a strong *posse comitatus,* and accompanied by an adequate force of zealous execu-

tioners, the *starshinas* patrolled their districts from morning to night, listening to complaints, settling disputes, punishing crimes, and administering justice generally in accordance with the summary processes of a drum-head court-martial. Evil-doers who thought they could deal with the *starshinas* as they had dealt with their predecessors, the starosts, soon discovered their mistake. The new officials enforced order and justice, by means of the lash, without fear, favor, or mercy, and punishment followed crime with as much certainty as if the sequence were a fixed law of nature.

The place of execution was a frozen pond in the lower part of the valley, near Pitch-Penny Field, where half a dozen able-bodied Russian peasants, armed with flexible rods and formidable rawhide whips, carried the decrees of the *starshinas* into effect. The regular formula of condemnation was, "To the ice with him!" And from this sentence there was no appeal. The criminal thus condemned was taken forthwith to the frozen pond, and, after having been stripped to the hips, was laid, face downward, on the ice. One executioner then sat on his head, another on his legs, and a third, with a rod or rawhide plet, covered his naked back with the crisscross lacing of



swollen crimson stripes which is known to Siberian hard-labor convicts as "the bloody grid-iron."

In the sentences of the *starshinas* no partiality whatever was shown to criminals of any particular class or social rank. For stealing a keg of hard-bread a Russian peasant was given five hundred blows with a birch rod, and was then expelled from the camp; but at the same time a clerk for a well-known firm of Blagoveshchinsk merchants, a gentleman and a man of some education, received two hundred blows for unnecessarily firing a revolver. Doubtless in many cases the punishments inflicted were cruel and excessive, but desperate ills required desperate remedies, and in dealing with a heterogeneous population, composed largely of runaway convicts from the Siberian mines, it was thought better to err on the side of severity than to show a leniency that might be attributed to weakness or fear.

For a period of two weeks or more the dread order: "To the ice with him!" might have been heard almost hourly in every part of the camp, and the snow on the frozen pond was trampled hard by the feet of the executioners and stained red with blood from the lacerated backs of condemned criminals. But the dishonest and dis-



orderly class finally learned its lesson. After three men had been put to death, scores expelled from the settlement, and hundreds mercilessly flogged with rods or the plet, even the boldest and hardiest of the runaway convicts were cowed, and the whole population of the camp was brought for the first time to a realization of the fact that a government resting on the will and consent of the governed, and supported by a posse comitatus of free citizens, may be quite as powerful and formidable in its way, and quite as great a terror to evil-doers, as a government based on the divine right of an anointed Czar, and supported by an armed force of soldiers and police.

Before the 1st of February, 1885, the triumph of the honest and law-abiding class in the Amur California was virtually complete. The petty crimes which had so long harassed and disquieted the camp became less and less frequent; the supremacy of the law was everywhere recognized with respect or fear; the experiment of popular self-government was admitted to be successful; and the *skhod* and its executive officers, having established order, were at liberty to turn their attention to minor details of civil organization. Adequate revenue for the support of the government was obtained by means of a judiciously

framed tariff on imports; a post-office department was organized, and provision made for a daily mail between the camp and the nearest station in Siberia; houses were built or set apart in the several districts for the accommodation of the *starshinas* and their clerks; a free public hospital was opened, with a staff of two physicians and half a dozen nurses, and was maintained at a cost of nearly thirty thousand rubles a year; the organic law was revised and amended to accord with the results of later experience, and the government of the republic gradually assumed a form which, if not comparable with that of older and more advanced communities, was at least more civilized and modern than that which then prevailed in Siberia. Intelligent and dispassionate Russians who had just come from the Amur California told me, when I met them at Chita, Nerchinsk, and Stretinsk in 1885, that life and property were absolutely safer in the Chinese republic than in any part of the Russian empire. "Why," said one of them, "you may leave a heap of merchandise unguarded all night in the streets; nobody will touch it!"

The first result of the establishment of a really strong and effective government in the valley of the Zhelta was a remarkable increase in the pop-

ulation and the prosperity of the camp. Miners, prospectors, merchants, mechanics, and "free adventurers" flocked to it from all parts of eastern Siberia. New gold-fields were discovered and developed in neighboring valleys; a large area of new territory was annexed; new administrative districts were organized; and before the 1st of June, 1885, the Chinese republic had a population of more than ten thousand free citizens, including six hundred women and children, and contained fifty hotels, three hundred shops and stores, and nearly one thousand inhabited buildings.

The development of so strong and well organized a community as this in the wildest part of Manchuria, absolutely without advice, assistance, or encouragement from any outside source, is an interesting and noteworthy proof of the capacity of the Russian people for self-government, and it is for this reason, mainly, that the story has seemed to me worth telling. Here was a population as heterogeneous, as uneducated, and as lawless as could be found anywhere in the Russian Empire. Nearly a third of it consisted of actual criminals, of the worst class, from the Siberian mines and penal settlements, and fully a quarter of the non-criminal remainder were ignorant

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Asiatics, belonging to half a dozen different tribes and nationalities. Never, perhaps, was the experiment of popular self-government tried under more unfavorable conditions. The experimenters had no precedents to guide them, no record of previous success to encourage them, and, at first, no trained or educated men to lead them. Relying solely on the good sense and self-control of the majority, they extended the right of suffrage to criminals and Asiatics as well as to honest men and Russians, summoned a *skhod* in which every citizen of the camp had a voice and a vote, gave the criminals and aliens their share of official authority by electing two convicts and two Chinese as members of the Council, and then, on the basis of manhood suffrage, free speech, equal rights, and the will of the majority, they established their republic, enacted their laws, and carried to a successful termination their unique experiment. As an evidence of the ability of the Siberian people to govern themselves, and as an indication of the form which their institutions would be likely to take if they could escape from the yoke of the Russian despotism, the history of the Amur California seems to me to be full of interest and instruction. But be that as it may, it is certainly a curious and significant fact that

the first true republic ever established east of the Caspian Sea and the Urals was founded by representatives of the most despotically governed nation in Europe, upon the territory of the least progressive and the least enterprising nation in Asia, and was modeled after the government of the strongest and most successful nation in America.

What would have been the future of the Chinese republic if the Zheltuga Free Adventurers had been left to their own devices we can only conjecture. They had already demonstrated their ability to deal successfully with internal disorders, and if their growth and progress had not been checked by external forces too strong to be resisted, they might ultimately have conquered and occupied a large part of northern Manchuria; but of course neither Russia nor China could afford to permit the establishment of a free and independent state in the valley of the Amur. China protested against the invasion of her territory as soon as she became aware of it, and called upon the governor-general of the Amur to interfere. The latter simply replied that the invasion was unauthorized; that he had no control over the invaders, who were a mere horde of vagrants and runaway convicts; and that the Chinese

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

authorities were at liberty to treat them as brigands and drive them out of the country. This, however, the Chinese authorities were utterly unable to do: partly because they had no force in northern Manchuria strong enough to cope with the Zheltuga Free Adventurers, and partly because the region occupied by the latter was an almost inaccessible wilderness. All that they could do was to send an officer up the Amur, with a small escort, to find out exactly where the invaders were, to ascertain their strength, and to threaten them with severe punishment if they refused to withdraw.

This was done in the winter of 1884–85, soon after the organization of the republic and the election of Fasse as President. A Chinese official, with an escort of thirty-six soldiers, came up the Amur from Aigun on the ice, visited the camp, and found, to his surprise, that it contained a population of more than seven thousand men, fully one-third of whom were armed. Seeing that it would be futile, if not dangerous, to threaten so strong and well organized a community as this, the Chinese envoy had a brief interview with President Fasse, and a few days later, without having accomplished anything, returned to Aigun. The Chinese government



thereupon renewed its protest, and insisted that Russia should take adequate measures to compel the withdrawal of the Free Adventurers from Manchurian territory. Protests and complaints were also received from district governors, proprietors of mines, and influential citizens in various parts of eastern Siberia, who alleged that the Manchurian gold fever was exciting and demoralizing the Siberian population; that the export of provisions to the Chinese republic was raising the prices and increasing the scarcity of food products in all the adjacent Siberian provinces; and that if the emigration to Manchuria were not speedily checked, work in many of the Siberian mines would have to be suspended for want of laborers.

At a conference of the territorial governors of Irkutsk, the Amur, and Transbakalia, held at Blagoveshchinsk early in the summer of 1885, these protests and complaints were duly considered, and a decision was reached to break up the Chinese republic by cutting off its supply of provisions. A few weeks later, Captain Sokolofski, with an adequate force of cavalry, was sent from Chita to Ignashina, with orders to establish a military cordon along the Siberian frontier from Albazin to the mouth of the river Shilka, to

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

arrest all persons attempting to cross that frontier in either direction, to confiscate the gold or merchandise found in their possession, and to take such other steps as might be necessary to compel the withdrawal of all Russian subjects from Chinese territory. This was a death-blow to the Chinese republic. Its population of more than ten thousand persons, relying upon its ability to procure supplies from the north, had made no attempt to cultivate the soil, and it could not maintain itself in the Manchurian wilderness for a single month after its communications with Siberia had been severed. Fasse, the President of the republic, was ordered by the Russian government to resign his position and return to his country upon pain of penal servitude; the *starshinas,* deprived suddenly of their chief, and apprehensive of future punishment for themselves, became demoralized and abandoned their posts; while the panic-stricken Free Adventurers, hoping to evade the cordon by crossing the Amur above or below it, packed up hastily their gold-dust, merchandise, and other valuables, and silently vanished in the forests. In less than a week the population of the Amur California had fallen from ten thousand to three thousand, and in less than a month the camp had been virtually



abandoned by all except a few hundred desperate runaway convicts, who preferred the chance of starvation in Manchuria to the certainty of arrest and deportation to the mines in Siberia.

The Chinese made no attempt to occupy the almost deserted gold placer until December, 1885, when they sent a force of *manegri,* or frontier cavalry, up the Amur River on the ice, with orders to drive out the remaining miners and destroy the camp. The soldiers reached their destination, in a temperature of thirty degrees below zero, on the 6th of January, 1886. The only occupants of the place at that time were about three hundred runaway convicts, fifty or sixty Chinese and Manchus, and a few Russian peasants lying ill in the hospital. The convicts, at the approach of the troops, formed in a compact body on Pitch-Penny Field and boldly marched out to meet the enemy, playing a march on three battered clarionets, and carrying high above their heads, on a cross-shaped flagstaff, a sort of ecclesiastical banner made out of a white cotton sheet, upon which they had painted rudely in huge black capital letters the words

WE
ALEXANDER
THIRD.

The Chinese cavalry, overawed by this extraordinary banner, or perhaps uncertain as to the result of a contest with the desperate ruffians who carried it, allowed the convicts to pass without molestation, and they marched away in the direction of the Amur, keeping step to the music of the clarionets, and relying upon the protection of a flag which combined the majesty of the Czar with the sanctity of an emblem of truce.

When the convicts had disappeared in the forest, the Chinese entered the camp with fire and sword, burned all its buildings to the ground, and put every living occupant to death, —not sparing even the sick in the hospital. Some were beheaded, some were stabbed and thrown into the flaming ruins of the burning buildings, and a few were stripped naked, tied to trees, and showered with bucketful after bucketful of cold water from the Zhelta River, until death had put an end to their sufferings, and their stiffened bodies had become white statues of ice. When the sun rose over the wooded Manchurian hills on the following morning, a few hundred piles of smoking ruins and a few ghastly naked bodies tied to trees and incased in shrouds of ice were all that remained of the Chinese republic.

FEB 2 3 1917